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A HOME WEEKLY

FOR WINTER NIGHTS
AND
SUMMER DAYS.

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No. 303.

THE LOST SHIP.

BY T. C. HARBROUGH.

A hundred fathoms deep she lies
Beneath the Arctic wave;
Above her masts the sea-gull flies—
Above the good and brave,
And many watch, with moistened eyes,
For the good ship Archtrave.

No human eye beheld her doom,
But time the story tells;
The merchant in the counting-room
Turns to the tolling bells
That echo but the cannon's boom;
What thoughts the sound compels!

Those same bells rung a merry peal
When from the northern port
The Archtrave, with new-laid keel,
Sailed by the antique fort.
A thousand voices wished her weal,
And a voyage calm and short.

To Greenland's ice-bedizened coasts
The Archtrave was bound;
There icebergs grim, like sheeted ghosts,
The good ship gathered round;
She fled! the hyperborean hosts
Pursued without a sound!

They conquered in the fight forlorn,
Her snowy sails were furled;
Her starry banner, rent and torn,
Into the deep was hurled.
That lovely emblem she had borne
In triumph round the world!

A hundred fathoms deep she lies
Beneath the Arctic wave;
The loneliest of winter skies
Make twilight o'er her grave;
Oh! pray ye all with moistened eyes
For the men of the Archtrave.

In peace they sleep, their common grave
Her own broad deck so true;
None braver wear beneath the wave
Our nation's honored blue.
God rest thee, good ship Archtrave!
God rest thy gallant crew!

Happy Harry, THE WILD BOY OF THE WOODS; OR, The Pirates of the Northern Lakes.

BY OLL COOMES.

AUTHOR OF "IDAHO TOM," "DAKOTA DAN,"
"BOWIE-KNIFE BEN," "OLD HURRICANE,"
"HAWKEYE HARRY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER VIII.—CONTINUED.

The following night found the young spy still in the camp of the enemy, and as they all gathered in the great subterranean chamber after supper, Kale turned to him and said:

"Harry, can't you sing us a song to pass the hours?"

"I never could sing, govenor, for shucks; for all I love music. But, boys, I'll tell you: Belshazzar can sing better than I can. He can sing like a lark, he can, for a joyous fact. He's got a good voice for music, boys, strange as it may seem, and I'll bet any man here that he can sing a thundering good lick for a big dog."

"I'll take that bet," said one of the men, "and I'll put up my rifle against the old dog."

"It's a whack, by the holy pokers!" exclaimed Harry. "It's not often I bet, but when a man comes up that way and names the terms, I can't crawfish. Yes, stranger, it's rifle against dog."

A dim twilight pervaded the cavern, and the faces of the men could be but indistinctly seen. Some of them were sitting, others lying about in attitudes of ease and repose. Harry himself sat leaning against a huge stalagmite on the shadowy side. His dog lay curled up, a rod or two away.

"You have all heard the bet, have you, boys?" asked the lad's opponent, who felt certain of some fun at Harry's expense.

"Yes, yes," responded his companions.

"I've been wantin' a good gun some time," said Harry.

"And I've been wanting a good dog-skin," answered the man, and his companions laughed at his remark.

"To-whit-to-who!" suddenly rung through the cavern. It was the startling cry of an owl. It was so distinct and harsh in its intonations that the men held their breath and listened—many looking completely frightened.

A moment's silence ensued. The men listened intently for the repetition of the sound. Belshazzar rose upon his hanches and barked, his deep bass voice sounding through the chambers of the cavern like the boom of a musket.

Then a strange sound floated through the place; it was the far-off sound of music—of some one singing a plaintive song.

The men looked from one to the other in blank astonishment.

The music grew louder, came nearer. Occasionally the listeners could distinguish a word or two.

"By heavens, it's the dog! You have lost, Talbot," said Kirby Kale.

The sound seemed to issue from the very lips of the dog, true enough. Every one would have sworn that it did.

The singing lasted for full two minutes, then it ceased and the dog laid down.

"I'll take the rifle," said the boy.

Talbot could make no reply. He was speechless, and so were his friends. But soon all recovered. They saw through the mystery—Harry was a ventriloquist!

"Ha! ha!" laughed Captain Kale; "well done, my lad; well done!"

"Bravo! Bravo!" responded his men.



"Surrender or I'll blow your head off!"

CHAPTER IX.

HARRY'S BLACK SWAMP YARN.

HARRY HARRY was a wonderful mimic, as well as ventriloquist, and he spent several hours with the band, illustrating his powers. He did so more to gain their confidence than for any other purpose. The more he amused and entertained them the less reserved they became toward him. Fully satisfied that Long Beard was safe, he resolved to be in no particular hurry about getting away, at least, not until he had found the object of Kirby Kale in lying in concealment there.

The youth could imitate the cry of any bird or animal. He started his auditors more than once with the buzzing of bees and the hissing of serpents. He seemed to have been endowed with an especial gift from nature, which his wildwood associations and daily practice had fully developed.

"You are possessed of a wonderful gift, Harry," said Kale. "I have seen persons before now who could imitate birds and beasts and throw their voice away in different directions, but have seen none to be compared with you."

"That's good praise, captain," replied Harry; "I know I've a fine thing of it, but I never boast of what I can do. I find it real handy to be able to mock things and to plant my voice around here and there. It's helped me out of more'n one difficulty, it has, for a fact. And then, I made a big thing out of it once, and I'll tell you how it was. You've heard of Red Satan, the Swamp Thief, I reckon? Well, at any rate, he was the most odacious cut-throat that walked the Black Swamp, about a hundred and fifty miles below here, and made a business of stealin' little children and big girls, and hidin' 'em in the swamp and holdin' 'em for ransom. Great, hoppin' horns, but he was a sly one—wusser than an Italian brigand. All the powers on earth couldn't capture him. The settlers finally got some blood-hounds and tried to hunt him down, but one day they found them dead on the outlaw's trail. They tried to trap him in every way possible. They searched the swamps through and through, from Maumee to Sandusky. They hunted the woods over and over, but they couldn't find Red Satan. I ailers believed, boys, that he had lots of onet, and I'll tell you how it was. He couldn't have got away so slick every time."

"Finally, people got tired of payin' him ransoms, although he was always honest enough to give up the child or gal, all right, soon as the cash was deposited in a certain place. But he kept on with his deviltry till first thing we knowed, two children and a young girl was missin' from the settlement, and notice found demandin' ever so much ransom for their safe return. Of course all knowed that Red Satan was at the bottom of it, though there was no name to the notice. People, however, concluded to pay the reward for him instead of the children, and so a big thing was offered to the man or men that would take the swamp-devil alive. In course they wanted him taken alive and then they could make him tell where the children were concealed; but if he was killed outright they might never find them. Wal, I wasn't a man, but I concluded I'd take a hand in the hunt, and so struck out for the big swamp. For two weeks I waded and plunged and crashed through the awful wilderness, like a mad alligator, and what should I do but find the den of the old tiger, Red Satan. It was in a part of the swamp where the settlers declared

no human bein' could penetrate, let alone live. But I found that the old Satan was not alone—that he had a partner, and that partner was none other than Arlow Vardocq, an Indian trader, who was well respected at the settlement."

"Red Satan was big enough to eat me tetchally up, and when I bolted right into his den onto him, I thought I'd follered my last trail. He jist got up and caterpillared. Holy pokers, how he champed his bits and cavorted! He and his pard jist almost snatched me bald-headed, they did, for a painful fact. They bound me and chucked me off into the loft, chuckin' over the idea of another child for ransom. But, great, hoppin' horns! they didn't know thar wasn't a soul in the north thad'd pay a dollar for the Wild Boy, as old fellers said would come to some bad 'eend. But up in the loft, whar they confined me, war the two missin' children and the young woman belongin' to the settlement. In course, Belshazzar was with me, but they didn't chuck him off for a ransom. They jist went sweet on him and concluded to adopt him, and keep him at the cabin. I war glad of this, for I war mortal afraid they'd kill him."

"Well, they kept me in that place nearly a week and almost starved the daylight out of my body. Them little children and the big gal fared lots better because they wasn't boys; but they took on awfully. I told 'em to take it easy as possible and mebby all'd turn out right yet. But it run along about eight days before Red Satan and his conspirator, Vardocq, left the cabin. When I war sure they war gone, I called to Belshazzar, whom they'd left locked in the room below. The old hero answered with a bark, and, after several attempts, he succeeded in springin' up into the loft, which wasn't over five feet high. I made him chaw my bonds off in a jiffy, then I set the other three captives free. So far things'd worked charmingly, but now come the tug: the three captives were so weak they couldn't hardly stand up, and I didn't know what to do with them; but do somethin' I must. I couldn't get them out of the swamp before danger was likely to come upon us, so what was I to do? At last I concluded to hide 'em and play shenanigan on ole Satan and his imp. So I hid 'em in his bed—a big pile of reeds and swamp-grass covered with blankets in a dark corner. You see, I removed some of the 'fathers' and substituted the captives' bodies, so's the bed wasn't no bigger. This done, I deliberately set down and waited till ole Satan and his left-bower come home. Great, hoppin' horns! then you'd ort to see that brimstone-pitain howl and swear. He frothed and foamed and blubbered. He asked me what I was doin' there, and where the others war. I told him that the big gal had got loose and had freed the rest of us, and had fled with the two little children. He actually got mad and cussed me for not goin' too. I told him my scruples of honesty forbid my desertin' him. I told him I kind a wanted to stay with him and adopt him as my father, for I war a poor lone orphan. I sobbed and snuffled and slobbered a little to give my words an air of truth. The tears jist boiled out of my eyes to show how I was affected, but I come dog gone near overidin' the thing and gittin' too much tobacco dust in my eyes. But, blessed if ole Satan and his tulip didn't melt to rds me. My tears brought them, it did, for a tender fact."

"Then father Satan wanted to know, 'y-u little idiot, how long's them other brats been gone?' I told the gentle ole tiger that they'd

jist left, and the way they'd gone, and that I'd help him hunt them, and away we went lickety-to-brindle out into the swamp. We hunted and hunted for their trail, but somehow or other we couldn't find it. Ole Satan jist swore a blue streak; he did, for a hard fact. But, all to once, we heard a cry off before us; it was the cry of a child—a sad, pitiful cry."

"Thar they are," roared the gentle-lunged Satan, and great horns! how he went a-smashin' through them reeds! I tell ye, it sounded as though a hurricane was sweepin' through the swamp. Ole Satan fell down once, and nighly busted himself; but he jumped up, gave himself a spiteful jerk, and launched away again. I follered close behind—me and Bell. Vardocq puffed on half a mile behind. But, somehow or other we couldn't overtake them fugitives to save us. Finally old Satan stopped to listen, and blest if we didn't hear that child's cry again off some distance to the left. With a snort the swamp angel plunged away in that direction; me and Belshazzar followed, ready to burst with laughter. Great on the earth, and sweat and swear!—whew! it was awful to hear the old galvanized monster. Every time he stopped to listen he could hear that child's cry, and so he kept on and on for more'n five miles. At length we came to the edge of a sloo, and had to cross an opening of several rods before reaching the timber beyond. A creek separated the swamps and woods also. On the edge of the marsh ole Purgatory stopped and listened, and dogged if we didn't hear it cry over in the timber. Away waltzed the father of sin. He come to the creek and made a leap, but his foot slipped and he fell plump into the water. Great Jehovah, boys! I couldn't help it—I laffed right out! But ole Brimstone didn't know it war me that laffed—I guess he thought it war the big gal that had seen him tumble in the water. The old Nick scrambled out the creek, cussin' till the trees around him trembled. He rushed into the woods like mad, and what do you suppose greeted his satanic ears?"

"Another child-cry," replied Captain Kale.

"Nary cry. It war, 'stand, villain!' and a dozen men with leveled rifles emerged from the thick undergrowth and surrounded him. Not until that moment did the deluded Satan suspect me of having led him into a trap. He turned and looked toward me, and I tell you that look was ole saller. I'll never forget it—never. He drew his knife and made one sweep to'rds me, but he was so furious that he overreached himself and fell—fell onto his own knife, which let the daylight out of him. By this Vardocq put in an appearance and was nabbed. Then I led the men back to the cabin and got the captives. Poor things! they war nighly gone when we rescued them. But you see, boys, my gift done the world some good that time, for I was the child that done the cryin' through the swamp."

"Well, that was quite an adventure for a boy," said Kirby Kale.

"It was, for a genuine fact, captain; but I've been in lots worse scrapes than that."

Thus, for some time, Happy Harry amused the band with thrilling stories of his own adventures, but finally, growing tired, he rolled himself in a blanket and went to sleep, most of the men following his example.

Before retiring, Captain Kale turned to three of his men who were preparing to leave the cave, and said:

"Have every thing in readiness, boys, and if the messenger from General Brock does not

arrive by midnight, we will embark for the Seven Islands."

Happy Harry heard the order, for all he was apparently asleep.

And long before midnight came, the Wild Boy was missing. Search was at once made through the cavern, but neither boy nor dog could be found; both had made their escape!

CHAPTER X.

HARRY AT HIS OLD TRICKS.

HAPPY HARRY had made his escape from the cavern a few minutes after the last man had retired to his couch. He saw that he had effectually thrown the band off his guard—that it exercised no watch over him, and he possessed of sufficient information to establish the true character of the men, he concluded now was the time to escape. This he effected by swimming out of the mouth of the cavern and across to the opposite side of the bay. Here he secured his weapons, which he had concealed before venturing into the cavern, and beat a hasty retreat northward along the bay. He pushed rapidly on until assured that the distance between him and the cavern placed him beyond danger, when he came to a halt.

Being somewhat tired and worn he sought a good place for rest, and lying down soon fell asleep. He slept soundly till morning. He did not wake till the sun was up. Then he arose to a sitting posture and rubbed his eyes. A bird sung in the tree-top above. He imitated its song. It chirped as if calling to a mate; Harry answered, and the bird came nearer.

Thus for some time he amused himself imitating the cry and song of birds, and his answers were to the ears of the feathered songsters what the eyes of the serpent are. It seemed magnetic—to draw them toward him. There seemed to be a fascination in his voice that they could not resist, for they gathered around in evidence of the fact. They alighted in the tree-top overhead, and in the bushes. They sung and twittered, and flew from bough to bough, peeping down at him with their diamond-bright eyes. They appeared as if desirous of approaching nearer, and yet afraid.

A pair of meek-eyed doves sat on a limb nearest the youth. A blue-jay took a position on the tip of a swaying bush. A frisky little robin swayed among the verdant foliage. A pheasant drummed on a log. A sly old woodpecker peered over a dead limb, on which he occasionally rattled his beak. A speckled tom-tit danced awkwardly around a tree-trunk, and a flock of blackbirds, with red and gold upon their wings, chattered above all. In answer to Harry's call a squirrel frisked out of a hole in a tree hard by, curled its tail upon its back, reared upon its hind feet, and regarded the surroundings with a critical eye.

And lying upon his back, Harry gazed upon all with an eye of admiration. He was supremely happy. He felt that his society was courted by these innocent inhabitants of the wildwood. He loved them, and the greatest joy of his life was to be surrounded by them. When he was lonesome—a vague feeling of unrest took possession of him—he called the birds. They would always come at his call, and their presence filled the unknown void in his young heart. They seemed to have, of him, none of that instinctive fear which causes the birds of the air and the beasts of the field to shrink from the presence of man. There appeared to be a mutual and sympathetic concord of love between Harry and the birds. There must have been some visible resemblance in their instinct and existence. It is true, Harry possessed a human heart susceptible of the tenderest emotions, a mind capable of thought and reason of unusual intelligence. And yet, he had been brought up in the woods, as it were, from infancy. The birds had been his daily and most constant companions, and he naturally partook of their nature. He never killed a bird, nor did he slay an animal unless absolutely necessary for the maintenance of life. He had learned to regard them as fellow-beings. But Harry knew his enemies, both human and beast. This knowledge, in most cases, was instinctive. He often met strangers whom he felt at a glance were enemies, and he was seldom wrong. His education combined both human reason and animal instinct. The latter often led him into doing things without the will's sanction.

He knew the language of the birds and animals to some extent, for the birds and animals do have a language. He knew by its cry whether a bird sought its mate or not. He knew by its song whether it was one of sadness or joy. He knew by its movements whether danger was near; and all this he had learned by association with them, just as we learn the ways and habits of others by mingling in their society.

For fully an hour the youth lay upon the earth, mimicking the different songsters and chattering with the squirrel, all the while his boyish face radiant with delight. The doves nodded their heads to him and cooed softly; the blackbirds chattered gayly and flashed and flapped their wings of scarlet and yellow in the bright morning sun; the pheasant ruffled her feathers, shook the dew from her wings and arranged her morning toilet with all the vanity of a fastidious belle. The red head of the comic old woodpecker was thrust shyly above or under the dead limb, now and then, like a bashful boy peering around a corner; the squirrel frisked in and out of its home, up and down the tree, and sprang from bough to bough, as though conscious of Master Harry's admiration.

Suddenly, however, the doves craned their

necks and flew rapidly away. The blackbirds rose in the air and circled from sight. The woodpecker dropped from his perch as if shot, flapped his wings and staggered off through the air as no other bird ever flies. The squirrel darted into his hole, and Harry was alone. He rose quickly to his feet. Belshazzar sniffed the air. The clatter of hoofs broke upon the silence. A man on horseback emerged from the woods and drew rein within twenty feet of our hero. In one hand he held a cocked pistol, which he leveled at Harry's head and called out:

"Surrender, or I'll blow your head off!"

The man wore a military cloak and a military air. Under the one was the uniform of a British officer, under the other a murderous intent.

"Great, hoppin' hornets, stranger!" exclaimed the boy, seeing the predicament he was in, "you needn't repeat that demand. If you want to be encumbered with trundle-bed trash, just take me a prisoner and let me ride behind you, for I'm awful tired. Besides, it don't make a tinker's dam who I'm with, or where I am, so's I have plenty to eat and skads of fun."

"Hexactly; but you don't look as though you'd been very well fed of late."

"No, I haven't, for a lean, straight fact."

"What's your name, little Yankee; and where do you live?" demanded the officer, dropping his hand to the pommel of his saddle, though keeping the pistol still turned upon the youth.

"I hain't got any name—never had—no home, either. I'm one of the babes of the woods; I'm for a fact."

"You have a young Yankee Doodle, and I'll call you such," replied the insolent Englishman. "My desire now is, sir, that you 'and me that rifle of yours."

"All munificent, major," and Harry handed him his rifle.

"Hi! how do you know I'm a major?"

"You look so dogged much like ole Deacon Hobb's big bulldog what they called Major."

"Hi! teach you manners, you insolent brat of a Yankee!" and the officer released his foot from the stirrup and kicked at the youth, but failed in reaching him.

"What is your lordship's further pleasure?" asked Harry, with mock politeness.

"In the name of his Majesty, King of Hengland, I command you to march on before me as my prisoner. Hi believe you are a Yankee spy?"

"Whew!" whistled Harry, in apparent surprise, "arn't you goin' to let me ride?"

"No words, Yankee Doodle. I have no time to spare in dallying with you. Moreover, it is not for prisoners to make conditions. Right about—face—march, I say."

Harry turned coolly upon his heel, and striking a military attitude and step, marched away before the officer, whistling Yankee Doodle in tones almost as shrill and musical as the fife.

The Englishman rode close behind him with his pistol in his hand; and as fast as the youth could walk, they hurried on through the forest. Belshazzar followed at the horse's heels.

Meanwhile the young borderman's thoughts were busy. He knew his captor was what his uniform proclaimed him to be—an English officer; and there was no doubt in his mind but that the man was on his way to the cavern from which he had so recently escaped, and that he was the messenger expected there from the English province with orders that would set the band in motion. If so, this man's capture would be of incalculable service to the Americans on the northern frontier. At least this was the conclusion Harry came to as he moved on, whistling merrily, to the eminent delight of his pompous captor.

At length their journeying brought them into a glade or opening in the woods across which their course ran, and when near the center of this clearing, a voice in the woods to their right suddenly shouted:

"Halt!"

Harry stopped, and the officer drew rein—both acting involuntarily.

"Dismount there, Englisher!" shouted a voice in the timber before them.

"Surrender!" demanded a voice behind, when the word was taken up and repeated at a dozen different points around the glade.

"Dismount and surrender!" cried that same creaky voice before them. "Or, by heavens, we'll pepper you through and through! Down, I command, in the name of the American Republic!"

The officer looked agast. His face turned white and his hand trembled. He saw no one, yet a dozen different, strange voices had demanded his surrender, and he felt positive that a dozen American rifles covered his breast. Former experience had taught British soldiers how Americans fought—that they made no unnecessary display and exposure of their persons. Trained to Indian-fighting, the border militiamen and scouts fought from behind trees, rocks, and whatever else afforded a cover; and this Harry's captor knew, hence his speechless horror.

"Stranger," said Harry, turning to the officer, "you're in a slashed ugly pickle, you are, for a clear fact. You're surrounded by ole Wheezy Jack's band of border scouts! and now if you'd like to save your bacon from bein' peppered down with bullets, you'd better give up. I know who you are, and where you're goin'. I just come from that—that's the cave where Captain Kirby Kale is concealed. You're the messenger they've been expectin' for two days, I know you are, major. They sent me out to watch for you and conduct you to the right place."

"Why didn't you say so before?" replied the major, "and I might have averted this trap!"

"I thought it would be such a good joke on you, major. I'm fond of a joke, and then it'd a' tickled the boys to death to see you come marchin' a friend into camp a prisoner."

"Do those scouts know you are their enemy?"

"Great bal'headed hornets! no; and I hope you won't let on. You hain't me a prisoner 'll keep suspicion down, don't you see, major?"

"Look here, then," said the officer, dismounting and wrenching a large brass button from his cloak, and placing it in Harry's hand. "If you escape, give that to Captain Kale. Tell him what befell me."

"I'll do it, major, with the greatest haste," replied Harry, slipping the button into his pocket.

Then the officer gave up Harry's rifle. Harry turned aside to depart.

"Do you surrender?" demanded that squeaky voice in the bush, south of the glade.

"I would not were I surrounded by men who were not afraid to come out and fight," replied the Englishman.

Happy Harry, with a mischievous smile upon his face, walked rapidly across the opening and entered the great woods. Belshazzar trudged along at his heels.

There was no reply to the Englishman's last retort. He stood ready to surrender, but no

one advanced, and he was afraid to move, for fear the concealed foe would make the least motion an excuse to fire upon him.

Five minutes passed.

"Cowards! knaves! poltroons! why do you not show yourselves?" demanded the humiliated officer. "Do you want an excuse to assassinate a prisoner?"

There was no response. Not a soul stirred from the woods. Birds twittered in the treetops, and a huge fox-squirrel perched upon a limb, chattered and barked as if in derision.

Again the officer called to his enemies, but there was still no response.

"I wonder if that boy has betrayed me?" he mused, "and is holding a council with those scouts?"

He waited half an hour—an hour, but with the same result. Nobody appeared to take charge of him. He was puzzled; he was dumbfounded. He stood there waiting like a fool, and at length he resolved to move across the glade, cost him what it might. He started off slowly, leading his horse. No one halted him—no one appeared to meet him on the margin of the woods—he could see nor hear no living soul near. He grew more courageous; still he was in a quandary. If any one was watching him, he resolved to know it; so he raised his foot and placed it in the stirrup, but no one bade him displace it. Then he threw himself into the saddle, and putting spurs, galloped away through the woods at a wild, breakneck speed.

Still no voice halted him, for none was near.

Happy Harry was the only living soul within miles of them when these voices bade the officer surrender. They were Harry's voices!

Brave little Harry! he had outwitted the haughty English major, and accomplished his heart's desire. He had got the officer's secret message into his possession, and with it had made good his escape.

And what historian has recorded this daring act of the noble boy? an act which ultimately led to the most decisive blow which England received in the memorable war of 1812, especially in the North-west.

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTAIN RANKIN'S FATE.

We will now go back in our narrative, and look after Captain Robert Rankin, whom, as we will doubtless be remembered, we left on the raft, engaged hand-to-hand with a savage. They were the only two combatants left, and were down, fighting as only desperate enemies fight, when Happy Harry saw them carried out to sea.

In the commencement of the battle, Rankin had received a flesh wound on the arm, that bled profusely, and from loss of blood he gradually grew weaker. But he fought on; he grappled with his adversary and together they went down. Neither one could get at his weapon. Rankin had a knife, the savage a tomahawk; both were in their girdles.

The young officer saw that he must soon end the conflict, or the tide of victory would turn against him. His strength was fast failing, but by a mighty effort the captain succeeded in throwing his adversary partially loose from him. It liberated his right hand, and, quick as a flash, he drew his knife. But the change in their position gave the savage the same advantage, and he drew his tomahawk, and raised it.

The hand of the white man was the quicker, and he plunged his knife into the warrior's breast. It partially broke the force of the descending tomahawk, yet the weapon fell heavy enough to strike Rankin senseless upon the deck. The savage, at full length, fell back in his death throes; a few convulsive quivers, and the form became motionless.

The raft floated on. The moon came up, and shone upon the two still bodies drifting further and further away into the great expanse.

Now and then a night-bird screamed along the bosom of the deep and flapped his somber wings above the dead. All else was silent.

The long hours of darkness wore away. The sun, rising, shot his quivering beams of light across St. Clair. They fell upon the raft with its white tent and ghostly faces still drifting on over the waves.

One face was lifeless, staring with stony eyes into the heavens. The other possessed a faint spark of life—Robert Rankin was not dead; but, all through the long night he had lain, totally unconscious, and not until the bars of morning light had diffused some of their warmth into his body was he able to move. Little by little he gained strength until he was able to raise his head and glance around him. He saw the boundless sea beneath and the sky above—nothing more. Ay! he did see something else—the stark form of his late adversary, and the white tent which he and Mucklewee had erected.

Gradually he collected his bewildered senses. One by one he recalled the events that had transpired up to the time he had fallen under the blow of the savage's tomahawk. But, where was his friend and guide, Bill Mucklewee? Where was the boy, Harry? What had been their fate?

The sun beating down upon his aching head increased his suffering. He attempted to rise, but sunk to the raft with sheer weakness. On his hands and knees he crawled into the tent out of the hot sun. Here he found everything exactly as they left it at the time Harry gave the alarm of danger. He at once took a flask of brandy from among his effects and swallowed some of the contents. It strengthened him—it renewed his spirits. But he was still unable to rise to his feet. He opened the box in which he had some cold provision, and taking a biscuit and some meat therefrom, ate heartily. This helped him also, and he rapidly grew stronger.

The hot sun beat down upon the raft. There was a light breeze blowing from the west, but it was hot and sultry as the breath of a storm.

Birds appeared afar off in the ethereal blue of heaven, tiny specks at first, but gradually growing larger and larger. They were approaching—they were buzzards. They finally took a position above the raft and rose and fell in the air in spiral circles—growing bolder and bolder each minute. They were after the dead—that savage corpse swelling in the hot sun, but Rankin was unable to remove it from their filthy beaks—unable to consign it to a watery grave.

Overcome by a sudden reaction, the young captain sunk down half fainting. He fell asleep, and for hours slept soundly. When he awoke the sun was in the zenith. It was pouring down upon him with a fervid heat. He looked out of the tent and over the great expanse of water. Upon all sides green-clad islands broke the monotony of the waves. The sight was so surprising that for a moment he believed it a delusion—a fantasy of a bewildered brain. He had drifted into the midst of a group of islands.

The young captain's heart now took courage. He looked out upon the islands. How

cool and inviting was their green, rustling foliage and sylvan shade! and yet, how like mockery, as, with his aching head, he reclined upon the raft beneath the blazing sun, unable to turn the heavy craft aside.

He carefully scanned each island, but no sign of human life was visible upon any of them. There was other life, however, near him. Something black, with great spreading wings, and bright, diamond eyes crossed his vision. It was a huge bird—a buzzard.

Mechanically the young man glanced at the corpse of the savage. He started at the revolting sight. The body swollen; the arms extended as if to clasp some one in their embrace; the jaws distended, and the protruding eye-balls staring awfully into the heavens. The young man shuddered with horror. A buzzard descended and perched itself on the bloated form. The filthy bird flapped its somber wings, held them extended for a moment, glanced around him, and then peered down into the stony face of the dead.

For a moment it regarded the ghastly object, then it uttered a cry of satisfaction—a cry that grated terribly upon the ears of its auditor.

Another bird immediately descended from the clouds. Then another, and still another, until nearly a dozen of the foul scavengers of the air had assembled at the banquet. They hesitated about beginning the feast. They chattered around the dead as if discussing some point of etiquette, or as if in doubt of something.

Suddenly their necks became outstretched. They uttered a shrill cry of alarm, then they spread their wings, beat the air, rose aloft, and circled swiftly away through the air. What had frightened them?

Rankin crawled to the door of the tent, and gazed out. To his surprise he found the raft floating in a narrow channel between two islands, both of which were covered with a dense growth of luxuriant foliage.

The raft drifted slowly down the channel, keeping away from either island as if guided by the hand of an invisible Charon who was carrying the soul of the suffering man out into the illimitable sea beyond this life.

Nearing the eastern extremity of the island, the helpless man saw a human figure push out from the shrubbery and pause upon the beach. A white woman stood there before him!

Scarcely had Rankin made this discovery ere a shadow crossed his path. Raising his eyes, they fell upon what appeared to be a bright vision—the delusion of a pleasant dream.

It was the face and form of a young girl. She stood upon the raft before him.

CHAPTER XII.

TEMPY, THE ISLAND ENCHANTRESS.

RANKIN'S mind was weak and confused with pain and mental torture. His brain ached and throbbed; his eyes were dimmed and blurred by constant watching and by the dazzling sun, and as he gazed upon the form and face of the young girl before him, he was not sure that she was a being of flesh. There was something so ethereal about the form, something so angelic about the face.

"You are hurt—wounded, stranger," the apparition at length remarked, seeing he was speechless, that there was blood upon him, that his face was pale, and that his eyes were wild and staring.

The sound of her voice broke the spell and drove all doubt and uncertainty from his mind; the being before him was in the flesh, and his very soul cried out in gladness.

"Weak," he responded, in a broken, feverish tone. "I am dying by inches, fair maiden. Look around you, and perhaps you can imagine a tith of what I have been suffering for what seems an age."

"I have already made myself fully acquainted with the distressed sight this raft presents," the fair girl replied; "but, sir, you are fast drifting out into the open lake, and if you would escape from this raft, now is the time. If you will accept of my assistance, I can help you to the island, where you will receive kind attention."

"Then you live upon the island?" he asked.

"The one to the left, as you float east," she replied.

Rankin staggered to his feet. He could not refuse the proffered kindness of the beautiful girl, even had he known that she was hurrying him into unknown dangers. He had fought bravely against the enemy and the horrors that surrounded him; but, almost in the very hour of his triumph, he yielded to the will of a tender, feeble girl.

But this girl possessed charms of soul and body that true manhood could not resist. She was not over seventeen years of age; her form was a model of exquisite beauty, her face a type of rare loveliness, her eyes were of a soft brown, with the wild, timid expression of a fawn's; her hair was of the color of her eyes, and gathered back from her brow and confined in braids.

She wore the rather pretty, yet odd frock of an Indian princess; but, instead of Indian blood coursing her veins, it might have been that of a royal queen. Her face and hands were tanned by exposure to the summer sun, and wind; but this exercise in the open air had been instrumental in imparting a healthful glow to her cheeks, a sparkle to her eyes, and strength and activity to her budding form.

She conducted Rankin to the rear of the raft, where a light canoe was fastened by its painter, and assisting him into it, she seated herself, took up the paddle, and turned toward the island. Plying the blade with remarkable skill, she sent the little craft flying through the waters, and in a very few minutes a landing was effected.

"Why, Tempy—sister!" a voice suddenly exclaimed, as Rankin and his fair rescuer stepped ashore; "you were right after all."

The speaker was a woman—she whom the captain had first seen upon the island. She approached them, expressing both surprise and sympathy in the look she gave the wounded man. She was perhaps ten years older than Tempy, a handsome woman, with threads of silver among her dark brown hair, a large, sad eye, and a face upon which was written the indelible mark of hidden sorrow.

"Yes, Margery," replied the maiden, "it was as I told you—a wounded man upon the raft, though he himself insists on it that he is dying."

"Far from it, I hope, stranger," said Margery. "Let us not tarry here," and turning, she led the way along a beaten path, beneath the cool shadows of the dense foliage.

Rankin and Tempy followed, moving very slowly, for the captain was so weak he reeled as he walked.

Threading their way through the grove, they finally debouched into an opening, in the center of which stood a log-cabin, half buried in an arbor of wild cucumbers and morning glories. In the rear of the building was a vegetable garden, in front a garden of flowers

that sent forth a mingled odor sweet as the perfumes of Araby or Ind.

Rankin was conducted into the cabin, which was furnished with neatness and plenty. Tempy gave him water in a stone basin with which to make an ablution, and after this needed operation had been performed, he was seated in an easy chair, when Margery, with womanly tenderness, dressed his wounds.

Then she brought some brandy and water, and gave him as a stimulant, and in a few minutes Robert Rankin felt that he was himself again.

He conversed freely with his fair Samaritan friends, giving a full history of his late perilous adventure, which eventually led him a guest to their cabin.

The females, however, evaded all questioning concerning their secluded home. Rankin did not come boldly out and ask what calling their male friends followed for a livelihood; he approached them with all the caution of a general approaching an enemy; but they proved themselves the most disciplined skirmishers, and defeated him at every point. Of course, this led to the supposition that the life of the women and their friends was shrouded in some mystery, and so he asked no further questions.

Finally the conversation turned to the probable war with England. I say probable, although the war was at that time fully inaugurated, and Rankin knew it, but he affected ignorance in order to test the knowledge and sympathy of his two female friends.

He soon found that they were ignorant of the threatened war, but as they expressed the strongest sympathy for the American cause, he soon became more communicative.

"War," he said, "has been declared, and already the enemy is moving across the frontier. Mackinaw is beleaguered, and in case it falls the straits will be open to the English fleet."

The women were greatly surprised by this startling information, and expressed fears for their own safety.

"The English in Canada have anticipated the war," continued Rankin, "and have already taken such steps as will result in a terrible blow to our country, unless we can manage to be prepared for them. There is a party of the enemy now in the territory, waiting only for orders from headquarters to strike the blow."

"Where is that party of enemies now?" asked Margery.

"I have been unable to find out; my impression is, however, that they are concealed in squads along the western shores of St. Clair, in the heavy woods, or they may be guests of their red allies, the Indians."

"When were orders from the British commander expected, do you know?"

"During the week."

"Then you are in the secrets of the British movements?"

"I am Robert Rankin, with the commission of captain of dragoons," replied Rankin, evasively, and with a smile.

"See you are in uniform," continued Margery.

"I have fared better without it under the circumstances."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the keen-witted Margery. "I comprehend the meaning of your evasions—you are a spy!"

"The same as a dead one, though. I am wounded—unable to move, and will be so for some days to come."

"Have you dispatches or word of importance to carry to any post or village?"

Rankin looked up and smiled. He made no reply.

"I know," continued Margery, "that the question is a bold one in one sense of the word, and foolish in another; but, sir, you can trust Tempy and I. This I assure you on the honor of a woman."

"But a true spy intrusts his secrets to no one but he whose ears they are intended for," replied Rankin.

"I ask not for your secrets, Captain Rankin; but I thought, if I could do so, I would take upon myself the responsibility of concluding your mission for you."

"You! a feeble woman!" exclaimed Rankin; "why you are weary leagues from the military post at Laketown."

"I care not for that," she replied, with a firmness that denoted her courage and patriotism; "a woman can serve her country as well as I man. Tell me what I am to say and I will start."

"I cannot, Margery," the young captain said, regretfully; "my manhood shrinks from sending a woman out alone on a wide, watery waste. Perhaps I will be able to strike out sooner than I expect."

"I know these waters well—perhaps far better than you, captain; besides, I am no novice in water-craft," Margery persisted. "To refuse me the conclusion of your journey may bring disaster to our country and entail the loss of hundreds of innocent lives."

"That's all true—very true, Margery; and if your ability is equal to your persistent desire to go to Laketown you can accomplish the mission. But then—"

"I'm a woman!" interrupted Margery, with asperity in her tone.

"I have nothing more to add, Margery," the young man said; and removing one of his boots he unscrewed the heel and took from the receptacle therein, a small leaden ball, which he handed to her, saying: "that contains the message I desire to be placed in the hands of none other than Colonel Miller, the commandant at Laketown. Had you not been a woman I would never have surrendered it otherwise than with my life."

"You have faith in woman's honesty, then, and so I shall endeavor to strengthen that faith," replied Margery, with the resolute determination of a brave and noble nature.

"God willing, this message shall be delivered into the hands of Colonel Miller."

Rankin was now highly impressed with the character of this woman. He saw that she was more than an ordinary personage in intellect, and was fully aware of the responsibilities and dangers she was assuming for the sake of her country.

The two women left Rankin's presence and went into an adjoining room—Margery to prepare for her long, perilous journey.

The young captain awaited their return impatiently. The soft, brown eyes, the pretty face, the sweet voice and gentle kindness of Tempy had made an indelible impression upon his heart, and he could hardly help thinking of the terrible fate that had thrown her in his way.

He had recovered so rapidly, or, at least, felt so much better since his advent in the island-home that his wounds gave him no uneasiness whatever. His heart feasted upon the mysterious beauty of the angelic Tempy, and his body grew stronger.

At the same time there was a struggle going on within his breast. His spirit of manhood rebuked him for surrendering his message, which was of the most vital importance, to Margery; while he felt it was a duty that he owed his country to have his message delivered

at all hazards. But, while he looked upon Margery as a woman of more than ordinary ability, it was his manly courtesy that rebelled at the idea of placing such a Herculean task upon the shoulders of a woman.

While speculating over the situation, Tempy burst into the room, like a sunbeam, her face radiant with joy.

"A little sailor hat, trimmed with blue, was upon her head. Gloves were upon her hands, and a light, purple scarf was around her shoulders."

"I'm going," she said, with a look of delight, turning to Rankin.

"Where?" asked the latter.

"To the post with the message. I prevailed on sister Margery to let me go, as her health is somewhat feeble. Besides, I think I know the lake better than she does."

"Tempy, you—" began Rankin, but he was interrupted by the maiden, who exclaimed: "I hope you will not object to my going, Mr. Rankin. I thought it my duty to take Margery's place, since she had so kindly volunteered to conclude your mission. So I wish you a happy sojourn here, Mr. Rankin, and a speedy recovery. Good-by, Margery!"

"Tempy!" cried Rankin, starting wildly up; "stay! do not go!"

But Tempy did not hear him; she was gone. He attempted to rise and follow her, but his limbs refused to support their weight and he sunk back, half unconscious, in his chair.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 801.)

THE OLD SCHOOLHOUSE.

BY "HELIOE."

Ah! half-decayed is that cabin old,
And the light in the window, long and low,
Where the sun came through like a stream of gold,
Were broken long ago.

And the chimney, built of sticks and clay,
Leans, like an old man, faint and weak;
Through cracks, where the mud has fallen away,
The winter winds now shriek.

The trough that led the sparkling rill
From the cool, upgushing, crystal spring,
Is held in its place by the firm rocks still,
A leaking, moss-grown thing.

How often there have I knelt to drink
When fired and flushed with play at noon;
And often I could not help but think
That "books" had come too soon.

The rocky ledges, brown and bare,
Where the purring streamlet ran between,
With the hawthorn-bushes standing there,
Was the dearest spot I won.

How oft we gathered the blossoms red,
The coronal of the early spring;
Or sat beneath, on the mossy bed,
To hear the wild birds sing.

Ah! many a day, in that old time,
We rambled along by the pebbly stream,
When memory echoed no funeral chime,
Nor held a broken dream.

The grassy slope and the leafy dell,
Where we gayly played at hide and seek,
What a joyous tale would the old haunts tell
If they could only speak!

But my eyes grow dim with rising tears
When I think of that buoyant, happy band,
And memory and grief, through long past years,
Go silent, hand in hand.

Ah! I love it yet, that schoolhouse old,
That tottering stands on the rocky height;
And its memories come, like a stream of gold,
Across my path to-night.

Nick Whiffles' Pet:
NED HAZEL, THE BOY TRAPPER.

IN TIME TO COME.

BY EREN E. REKFORP,
Author of "Silver Threads Among the Gold."

The snow is falling, falling,
Softly and white and still,
And hides all the sentinel marbles
By the graves upon the hill.

I sit and watch in the twilight
The flakes fall still and slow,
And dream of the dead dreams hidden
In graves that are long and low.

Snow of the winter, falling
Above the graves of our dead;
And the snows of a sorrow hiding
The graves of the dreams that fled!

Are the dear ones warm in their slumber
Beneath the white, pure snow?
Oh, answer me, answer me, loved ones,
For I long so much to know!

Are the dreams that our sorrows cover
Away from the sight of men,
Waiting the resurrection
Of a spring beyond our ken?

I believe that in some day coming
Our dead will be dead no more,
And our hopes will be sweet in Heaven
Where graves shall be known no more.

Vials of Wrath:

THE GRAVE BETWEEN THEM.

BY MRS. MARY REED CROWELL,
AUTHOR OF "TWO GIRLS' LIVES," "LOVE-
BLIND," "OATH-BOUND," "BARBARA'S
FATE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A MAN'S CURSE.

It had not been a difficult task for Georgia to free herself from Ida Wynne's society, after the two had gone to the parlor, leaving the gentlemen to discuss their wine. Ida was all impatience for Havelstock to join them, and while Georgia was wondering what she should invent as an excuse for leaving the party at so unusual an hour as nine, Ida was trying to think of a way whereby she might have Mr. Havelstock to herself for a *tete-a-tete* promenade.

It seemed an endless while, the hour from just before eight, when they left the dining-room, and Ida fretted restlessly, from the piano to the window, then to the piano again. "It seems to me the gentlemen have an uncommon amount of interesting subject-matter, to-night. It is nearly nine, and they are over their wine yet."

Nearly nine! the words smote Georgia's ears as they left Ida's unconscious lips, like coals of molten lead. Nine—and what then? She was very quiet, so that her demeanor was oddly in contrast with Ida's, who brightened wonderfully when footsteps, unmissably Mr. Lexington's and Mr. Havelstock's, neared the door. Some one passed out, leaving a faint odor of cigar behind them; then Mr. Lexington entered alone.

"Frank desires me to excuse him to the ladies, and I am sure you will grant him the request. Miss Ida—yours are merciful!"

Her eyes were full of disappointment, that she took no especial pains to conceal. "I think Mr. Havelstock is very ungracious, indeed. We have been awfully stupid, haven't we, cousin Georgia?"

Mr. Lexington smiled at her frowning forehead.

"I cannot imagine stupidity and you ladies in the same connection; but if such is the case, I fear you are doomed for to-night, as I have imperative business in the library that will detain me till midnight."

Georgia's heart gave a sudden bound of relief.

"Then I shall use the opportunity to write up my correspondence. Good-night."

Ida was off at once, in one of her impulses, leaving the husband and wife alone.

He did not speak to her, but crossed the room to a favorite lounging-chair, into which he dropped, in an attitude of fatigue and weariness that touched the woman who watched him so closely, every fiber of her being burning to comfort, caress him.

"You are tired—Mr. Lexington?"

She ventured the remark in a timid sort of way that was ineffably sweet—even to him.

"Very. My head aches frightfully."

She took several steps nearer him, then drew a chair beside him, strangely tender and pitiful.

"May I smooth your hair? You—you used to like it."

She seemed ashamed to offer her services; yet, when she spoke, she would not have unsaid it. He shivered as her fingers touched his hair; she felt the tremor, and, in a sharp thrill of penitence, laid her hand on his forehead, and drew back his head until he was forced to look in her eyes, that drooped toward him—intense, soulful.

"Thee—can this breach not be bridged? Look at me, only a moment, and answer me. Is it my fault? am I not penitent, willing to suffer anything rather than this living death?"

Her sweet, wistful voice, fraught with wifely love, almost maddened him; and yet—he knew she was not in earnest; he was sure she had some object in view; had not faithful Havelstock warned him of this very thing?

Was not now the time to show his authority, his injured pride?

"Thee—you know how I love you; you know I am willing to forgive everything, if you will only take me back. Will you?"

A moment of desperate resolve.

"No. It is I who need to forgive you. When I wrong you as you wrong me—then I will converse with you on this topic."

Georgia's face convulsed with sharp pain.

"Thee, darling, I have done you no wrong—

—you cannot think it, surely. You know I love you, dearly, dearly, for all there is my baby's grave between us. But, see, my husband, I stretch my hands across it, and ask you to let me take you in their longing embrace!"

She reached her beautiful arms out toward him, her beseeching eyes meeting his.

He turned his head away, after a cold, cruel look at her.

"That is all very well, in its place, although I am not an admirer of private theatricals."

His voice was husky, and she noted a tremor in it. Would he be conquered, yet by her love?

"I do not mean it—you think that? Ah, Theo, prove me; only let me love you; only let me live for you!"

Her lovely eyes thrilled him through and through, as he turned his handsome head again to look at her. Then, he arose deliberately from his chair, and looked in her face.

"Georgia, I am proof against all such attempts on your part to install yourself in my affections. What your object is, I cannot pretend to say; this I can say: I believe your professions to be a sham and a fraud. You do

not love me, or you would never have wounded my pride, hurt my feelings, and insulted my manhood as you did that never-to-be-forgotten day."

She listened in breathless silence, the old, cold horror gathering around her heart, the old woe returning to her eyes that, for one little moment, had been so lighted with love's pleading.

Then she bowed her head, with a quiet scorn, that he felt meant how deeply he had wronged her, and swept from his presence with the air of an insulted duchess.

The same pitiful story over and over: two natures, prone to misfortune, continually at warfare; two passionate souls who loved each other madly, idolatrously, ever repelled by the evil genius their love evoked; fire and ice; oil and water—no commingling, no uniting.

In the hall Georgia paused to take a shawl from the rack, and then went out—to the ill-starred tryst with Carleton Vincy.

She had made such a desperate effort to be reconciled to her husband before she came here; she had actually humbled herself to him, and been repulsed, just as she expected would be the case—forever.

She was feeling miserably dejected and full of keen bitterness when she entered the little summer-house, where she found Carleton Vincy before her, pacing impatiently to and fro, with a dark frown on his coarse features.

"So you've actually put on that appearance, have you? It is nearly half-past nine, and in ten minutes more I should have sent in my card."

Georgia made no immediate answer, as she dropped wearily into a rustic chair near the door.

"I came as soon as I could. Now, Mr. Vincy, tell me what it is you want me for? I cannot possibly remain here longer than a few minutes."

She tried to speak with a brave indifference she was far from feeling, and as a natural consequence failed, and Vincy noted both attempt and non-success.

He laughed softly, as he pushed his hat off his forehead, and flung himself heavily on a light iron settee.

"Is it then so wonderful that a man desires an interview with his wife whom he has not seen for years and years? I will confess, however, it is not the meeting I expected."

His eyes glowed redly as he looked critically with an admiring gaze that made Georgia shiver with repellant disgust.

When he spoke again, a second after, his voice was like it had been, years and years ago, when it had held such a witchery for the girl whom he had won so easily.

"I can hardly realize you are Georgia—you, this magnificent woman, with the cold pride of a duchess, with the grace of a fairy queen. What can have wrought the marvelous change in you, whom I remember as a thin, fretful woman?"

Georgia's eyes darkened, and her lips curled.

"I am not able to return the odious flattery. Time and years have not improved you, Mr. Vincy. I remember a handsome, gentlemanly appearing man, whose personal beauty was a mask for his deep-dyed rascality and treachery."

I see now, the mask removed, and the man as he is."

He scowled under her stinging words, even while he knew what she averred was perfectly true. He had changed, wonderfully; he had grown much stouter in figure, and heavy, and coarse featured. His eyes were a dim, blurred expression, and the lids had a suspiciously red edging to them. His face was bloated, and had a purplish tint like that of a man predisposed to plethora, like a man who was no stranger to the wine-cup.

His hair had grown scant, and he altogether repudiated the razor, so that his beard and moustache were long, rambling.

He did not especially enjoy the scornfully-scrutinizing gaze she bestowed upon him, and he frowned angrily.

"Well, which have you finally decided upon—Satyr or Seraph? Whichever I am, remember this—I am your husband. By Heaven, you shall remember that!"

His face wore a mocking, Satanic smile, and he bent his head nearer her.

"Mr. Vincy, you were my husband once; you are the father of my only child—as such I never can quite despise you, thoroughly as your conduct taught me to dislike and distrust you. You wooed and won me, and married me when I was a foolish, ignorant child, who could form no possible opinion of what sort of husband you would make. Your perfect beauty fascinated me, and I went to my fate, led by you."

He listened attentively to her low, bell-like voice, whose sweetness stirred him strangely; he watched her beautiful face with a wild thrill at his wicked heart that had known a hundred loves; that, for the first time, was actually aroused by passion as sudden as absorbing, as fierce as hopeless.

"Then I did please you once, Georgia? In those olden days, when I was so cruelly wicked, of which I so repent me? For the sake of those days, forgive me."

He was not lounging on the settee now; his dull apathy was gone, and an intense excitement made his blood rush with unwonted force through his veins. He had arisen from the seat, and was standing before her, in an attitude of entreaty, his eyes filled with emotion, his voice as sweet as in bygone days.

Georgia drew her chair several inches backward, with no token of softness or pity on her face.

"It is easy to forgive—" she sighed, as she thought of Lexington, and Vincy thought his triumph was coming.

"I can forgive you all the misery you have caused me—misery you know nothing of, and never will. But of what avail is my forgiveness? You are a stranger to me. I am Theodore Lexington's wife."

She held her head up proudly, as she claimed the empty title of her darling's name, and in the surging tenderness that illumined her eyes, and in the ineffable sadness of her red lips, Vincy only saw a beauty that maddened him.

"By all that is eternal you are not his wife! You know it, as well as I do; you know your marriage is unlawful since I am alive; you are my own, and even were you not by any law in the calendar, you still should be, for I am a law unto myself."

Mingled with the passion in his face and eyes was a fierce exultation, almost savage in its defiance. He half smiled as he watched her, evidently expecting to see her shrink under his words.

She met his gaze quietly, with a conscious strength that made him feel he could not touch her heart. The thought lent new malignancy to his countenance as he listened to her answer.

"I have said we are henceforth nothing to each other. Even if I were not Mr. Lexington's wife, you would be as little to me. Even

the tie our child would have been, is broken; she is dead."

A quivering of her lips told of that blow to her—a double blow, dealt by the hand of the best beloved on earth; Vincy saw the agitation, and sneered.

"It is a good thing. Babies ought to die when they are as snarling and as puny as I remember ours was. Let that pass."

His heartlessness stung her to the quick.

"Yes, let it pass, while I, her mother, tell you, her unworthy father, whom than Imitate, I would rather know dead—when I tell you, you have no possible claim on me."

The laws of New York State granted me a full, free divorce a year after you deserted me. I have the document safe in my possession."

She looked at him with eyes full of conscious power, her magnificent figure proudly erect, one hand lying on the rustic oaken table, displaying its perfect beauty and firmness.

A horrible oath burst from Vincy's lips.

"I heard it before; you need not think you tell me news, as you seem to delight in doing. But did I not just tell you I am a law unto myself? I swear it—that, though freed by your wonderful document, you are as much in my power as though you never owned it. Beautiful Georgia, do you think I shall stand calmly by and see your witchery, your charming fascination, and allow Lexington to be benefited by it?"

She shrunk before the devil in his eye; then, arose from her chair, and drew her shawl over her shoulders.

"There is no need to prolong this useless interview, or to repeat it. I have shown you my position, which I never shall abandon. From the present moment, during which our paths have temporarily converged, they diverge again, forever. From this moment our acquaintance ceases, and to me you are as you were twenty-four hours ago—dead."

The quiet dismissal goaded him into a perfect frenzy. He grasped her dainty wrist with a hard, iron grip, and fairly hissed in her ear, so fearful was his furious rage.

"I swear it shall not be so! By every hope you regard as sacred, I swear you shall repent this! I came to you, back from the dead, disposed to be conciliatory even after I had learned your falsity. I offer you my forgiveness, my affection—and you spurn me as if I were the scum of the earth. I will confess, however, it is not the meeting I expected."

His eyes glowed redly as he looked critically with an admiring gaze that made Georgia shiver with repellant disgust.

When he spoke again, a second after, his voice was like it had been, years and years ago, when it had held such a witchery for the girl whom he had won so easily.

"I can hardly realize you are Georgia—you, this magnificent woman, with the cold pride of a duchess, with the grace of a fairy queen. What can have wrought the marvelous change in you, whom I remember as a thin, fretful woman?"

Georgia's eyes darkened, and her lips curled.

"I am not able to return the odious flattery. Time and years have not improved you, Mr. Vincy. I remember a handsome, gentlemanly appearing man, whose personal beauty was a mask for his deep-dyed rascality and treachery."

I see now, the mask removed, and the man as he is."

He scowled under her stinging words, even while he knew what she averred was perfectly true. He had changed, wonderfully; he had grown much stouter in figure, and heavy, and coarse featured. His eyes were a dim, blurred expression, and the lids had a suspiciously red edging to them. His face was bloated, and had a purplish tint like that of a man predisposed to plethora, like a man who was no stranger to the wine-cup.

His hair had grown scant, and he altogether repudiated the razor, so that his beard and moustache were long, rambling.

He did not especially enjoy the scornfully-scrutinizing gaze she bestowed upon him, and he frowned angrily.

"Well, which have you finally decided upon—Satyr or Seraph? Whichever I am, remember this—I am your husband. By Heaven, you shall remember that!"

His face wore a mocking, Satanic smile, and he bent his head nearer her.

"Mr. Vincy, you were my husband once; you are the father of my only child—as such I never can quite despise you, thoroughly as your conduct taught me to dislike and distrust you. You wooed and won me, and married me when I was a foolish, ignorant child, who could form no possible opinion of what sort of husband you would make. Your perfect beauty fascinated me, and I went to my fate, led by you."

He listened attentively to her low, bell-like voice, whose sweetness stirred him strangely; he watched her beautiful face with a wild thrill at his wicked heart that had known a hundred loves; that, for the first time, was actually aroused by passion as sudden as absorbing, as fierce as hopeless.

"Then I did please you once, Georgia? In those olden days, when I was so cruelly wicked, of which I so repent me? For the sake of those days, forgive me."

He was not lounging on the settee now; his dull apathy was gone, and an intense excitement made his blood rush with unwonted force through his veins. He had arisen from the seat, and was standing before her, in an attitude of entreaty, his eyes filled with emotion, his voice as sweet as in bygone days.

Georgia drew her chair several inches backward, with no token of softness or pity on her face.

"It is easy to forgive—" she sighed, as she thought of Lexington, and Vincy thought his triumph was coming.

"I can forgive you all the misery you have caused me—misery you know nothing of, and never will. But of what avail is my forgiveness? You are a stranger to me. I am Theodore Lexington's wife."

She held her head up proudly, as she claimed the empty title of her darling's name, and in the surging tenderness that illumined her eyes, and in the ineffable sadness of her red lips, Vincy only saw a beauty that maddened him.

"By all that is eternal you are not his wife! You know it, as well as I do; you know your marriage is unlawful since I am alive; you are my own, and even were you not by any law in the calendar, you still should be, for I am a law unto myself."

Mingled with the passion in his face and eyes was a fierce exultation, almost savage in its defiance. He half smiled as he watched her, evidently expecting to see her shrink under his words.

She met his gaze quietly, with a conscious strength that made him feel he could not touch her heart. The thought lent new malignancy to his countenance as he listened to her answer.

"I have said we are henceforth nothing to each other. Even if I were not Mr. Lexington's wife, you would be as little to me. Even

the tie our child would have been, is broken; she is dead."

A quivering of her lips told of that blow to her—a double blow, dealt by the hand of the best beloved on earth; Vincy saw the agitation, and sneered.

"It is a good thing. Babies ought to die when they are as snarling and as puny as I remember ours was. Let that pass."

His heartlessness stung her to the quick.

"Yes, let it pass, while I, her mother, tell you, her unworthy father, whom than Imitate, I would rather know dead—when I tell you, you have no possible claim on me."

The laws of New York State granted me a full, free divorce a year after you deserted me. I have the document safe in my possession."

She looked at him with eyes full of conscious power, her magnificent figure proudly erect, one hand lying on the rustic oaken table, displaying its perfect beauty and firmness.

A horrible oath burst from Vincy's lips.

"I heard it before; you need not think you tell me news, as you seem to delight in doing. But did I not just tell you I am a law unto myself? I swear it—that, though freed by your wonderful document, you are as much in my power as though you never owned it. Beautiful Georgia, do you think I shall stand calmly by and see your witchery, your charming fascination, and allow Lexington to be benefited by it?"

He walked to and fro more calmly, for another half-hour, and at length, still pale, still bearing distinct traces of his inward tempest, he emerged from the copse, and walked slowly down the path Georgia had taken. As he neared the summer-house he heard voices, and it instantly occurred to him that he had seen Georgia when he left the house, so that in all probability it was she who was in the summer-house.

But with whom?

He trod softly as he neared the vine-covered casement at the rear; he stepped lightly over the loose twigs until he gained a position where he commanded both sight and hearing; where he listened with keen relish to the interview between Carleton Vincy and his divorced wife; and from which spot he had suddenly appeared to Vincy after Georgia's departure.

The brilliant starlight was sufficient to enable features and expressions to be perfectly seen; and as Havelstock entered, with light, careless words on his lips, Vincy stared in stupid amazement.

"What is the matter? Have you seen a ghost, or are you one yourself?"

Havelstock laughed, chillingly—so mirthlessly that its sound was horrible to hear.

"Ghosts are not supposed to endure what I've gone through since sunset. Vincy, you are in awkward need of a helpful, valuable friend—so am I. Shall we strike a bargain?"

Vincy listened to the cold, metallic tones of Havelstock's voice with an inward glee at the thought of securing him as an ally against Georgia.

"You speak the truth, Havelstock. I do need a faithful friend who will lend me assistance and advice while he guards my secret. In return for such services I would scruple at nothing."

The two men looked in each other's eyes silently, meaningly. Then Havelstock held out his hand.

"It is a mutual understanding, then."

Vincy grasped his hand and pressed it a moment in confirmation.

Then he took a cigar-case from his pocket, from which they selected cigars. Then Havelstock opened the vile campaign in which they had enlisted.

"You wonder why I was so unlike myself, Vincy. Don't you think a fellow fixed as I am has every reason to look pale, and feel more so?"

He rapidly related Mr. Lexington's offer, and the fact of his marriage, that he had related a month before to Vincy.

"It is a mess—a bad mess," said Vincy, slowly, when Havelstock had finished. "You married her for love, and now you find her beauty has turned into a curse for you."

"That's it; and it makes me hate her to think she stands between me and luck."

"She need not," said Vincy, so quietly that Havelstock started in shocked amazement.

"Good heavens, man, your cold-blooded assertion horrifies even me. Don't suggest such a thing; my hands were never yet red with—"

Vincy laughed softly.

"You altogether misapprehend me, my dear old fellow. I intended no harm even to a hair of your wife's head. I merely said she need not stand in your way."

Havelstock took his cigar from his lips and eyed Vincy in wonderment.

"What do you mean? Is there any possible way for me to secure Tanglewood, or rather half of it, under existing circumstances?"

His eyes gleamed eagerly.

"There is a way whereby you may marry Miss Wynne, thereby securing her fortune as well as Mr. Lexington's offer, and yet not a hair of Mrs. Havelstock's head be injured."

He spoke with an air of conscious assurance that fairly thrilled Havelstock.

Vincy went on, "If you will help me get Georgia Lexington in my power again—if you will assist me to wreak my revenge on her—I will point out your way, step by step, till you reach the very topmost rung of the ladder you want to climb."

"I swear I will," returned Havelstock, quickly. "Now, the plan?"

So, sitting there in the silent, solemn noon of night, the two men laid their devilish plot to destroy Ethel Havelstock's happiness—sweet, innocent Ethel, who that very moment lay sleeping with one hand under her pink cheek, dreaming of the time when her husband should return.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 298.)

Erminie:

THE GIPSY QUEEN'S VOW.

BY MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING,
AUTHOR OF "THE DARK SECRET," "AN AW-
FUL MYSTERY," "VICTORIA," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXVII.

GREEK MEETS GREEK.

"I scorn," quoth she, "thou oxbow silly, Quarter or counsel from a fox."

"If thou canst force me to it, do,"—HUBERAS.

"I had rather chop this hand off at a blow, And with the other fling it in thy face."

Then stoop to this.—SHAKESPEARE.

PETRONILLA rode gayly along to the little bustling, half-village, half-city. Justestown, thinking over her late surprising proposal, and scarcely knowing whether to laugh at or pity poor Mr. Toosyeps. As she reached the town these thoughts were dispelled by the busy scenes around, and Pet found herself fully occupied in nodding to her various friends and acquaintances as she passed.

Pet's destination was the post-office, a large building which served as a store, hotel, and post, all in one. As she drew rein at the door, the mail-coach drew up, and Pet lingered where she was a moment, in order to avoid the crowd.

The passengers crowded in, and as the coach-door opened, a young gentleman sprang out and assisted a lady, closely veiled, to alight. Neither of them noticed Pet; so they did not observe her quick start, her sudden flush, and the vivid lighting up of her beautiful eyes.

These outward and very unwonted signs of emotion on Pet's part passed away as quickly as they came, and in one minute more she was as cool, saucy, and composed as ever.

"Is there any one here who will drive us to Old Barrens Cottage?" said the young gentleman, glancing at the landlord.

"Yes, sir; in ten minutes, sir; just step in, sir; my boy's gone off in a gig with a gent, but he'll be back soon. Walk right in this way, sir," replied the obsequious landlord, with a profusion of bows to the well-dressed and distinguished-looking stranger before him.

"I would rather not wait," said the gentleman. "Can you not let me have some other conveyance, and I will drive over myself?"

"Very sorry, sir, but they're all engaged. Just step in, sir, and your good lady,

fection the gruff, surly tones of Master Bob. "I'm fond of music myself, if you ain't, and so is the boss, who would not go a step if I didn't whistle, so I'll just keep on if it's all the same to you." And another stave of "Hail Columbia" pierced the air.

"How long does it take you to drive to the Barrens?"

"Well, sometimes longer and sometimes shorter; and then again not so long," said the driver, touching the horse daintily with his whip.

"Quite enlightened, thank you! Do you know the family at old Barrens cottage?"

"There ain't no family there; there's only the old woman what can't walk or nothin'; and a nigger. Them two don't make one whole member of society, let alone a family. Was you acquainted with them, square?"

"Slightly so," said the gentleman, smiling.

"Well, maybe you knew that there cove that went away—your Mr. Ray?"

"I believe I had that honor," replied the young man, with the smile still on his handsome face.

"Honor! humph! I reckon you're the only one ever thought of an honor to know him," said the lad, grimly. "He always was a vagabone, and ended as all vagabones must, at last."

For one moment the young gentleman glanced at the driver, evidently hesitating whether to pitch him then and there out of the gig or not; but seeing only a little boy with an exceedingly muddy face, he thought better of it, and said:

"Well, this is really pleasant to listen to! And how did this vagabone, as you call him, end?"

"Why, he went away from home, when they couldn't stand him any longer; and the last we heard of him was that he was in State Prison for life."

A low peal of laughter from the young lady followed this, in which, after a prolonged stare of astonishment, the gentleman was obliged to join.

"Well, for cool, innate impudence, and straightforward bluntness, I'll back you against the world, my good youth," said the young man, while the little driver sat looking as sober as a judge.

"And the young lady who lived there, what became of her?"

"There wasn't never no young lady," said the lad; "there was a little gal with yaller hair, but she went off, too; and I expect, ran away with some one-eyed fiddler or other. They was English, and no better couldn't have been expected," said the boy, in strong accents of contempt.

Another low laugh from the young lady and a prolonged whistle from the gentleman followed this.

"Well, I am sorry my friends have turned out so badly. How about the others, now; Judge Lawless and his family, for instance; Admiral Havenful, Mr. and Miss Toospegs, and the rest?"

"They're all hanging together! Mr. Toospegs is going to get married and take in sewing for a living; and Miss Priscilla goes round making vinegar."

"Making what?"

"Vinegar," said the lad, gravely. "The grocers gets her to look into barrels of water, when they turns into vinegar mediatly."

"I shouldn't wonder," said the gentleman, laughing; "but the others—Judge Lawless, Miss Lawless, what of her?"

"Oh, she's all right. Don't expect she'll be Miss Lawless, though, much longer," said the boy.

"Not why! how! what do you mean?" said the young gentleman, starting so suddenly that the boy looked up, apparently quite terrified by this unexpected outburst.

"See here, square, you'll skeer the boss if you keep on like this. If you're subject to 'acks of this kind you ought to have told me before we started, and not 'arm the boss," said the boy, sharply.

"Tell me what you mean by that! Speak!" said the young man, vehemently.

"By what! skeering the boss?" said the lad.

"No, about Miss Lawless," was the impetuous rejoinder.

"Oh! Well, I have heard tell she was going to be married. Likely as not she is too; got lots of beaux."

The young gentleman's face flushed for a moment, and then grew set and stern.

"Did you hear who she was to be married to?" said the young lady, leaning over.

"No, marm; nobody never can tell what she'll do; likely as not she'll get married to the one nobody expects her to marry. She always was the contraryest young woman always that ever was," said the boy, casting a quick, bright, searching glance from under his long eyelashes, at the handsome face of the gentleman. And it was a handsome face, the very handsomest the saucy little driver had ever seen; and it might have been his close proximity to the owner that sent such quick thrills to the heart of the quondam boy, and set it beating so unnecessarily fast under the jaunty black coat. The dark, clear complexion; the straight, classic features; the thick, jetty, clustering hair; the high, princely brow; the bold, flashing, falcon, black eyes; the thin, curving nostril, that showed his high blood; the proud, haughty mouth, shaded by a thick, black mustache; the tall, slight, elegant form; the high, kingly movements—these made up the outward attractions of him by whose side Pet sat. Of course, every reader above the artless age of five knows as well as I do who it is, so there is not the slightest necessity for announcing his name as Raymond Germaine.

There was a long silence after this. The young gentleman, with a cold, almost sarcastic look, watched the objects as they passed, and the little boy drove on, whistling as if his life depended on it.

Then the young lady leaned over and began a conversation in a low voice with her companion, to which he replied in the same tone. The lady had thrown back her veil, disclosing a face of such rare loveliness that it seemed a downright shame, not to say sin, to hide it behind that odious brown covering. The driver turned round to catch a better view of her face, and the young lady met the full splendor of those dazzling dark eyes. The boy instantly turned, and began whistling louder than ever.

"What a handsome boy!" said the young girl, in a low tone, yet loud enough for the "boy" in question to hear. "What splendid eyes! I thought there could be but one such pair of eyes in the world, and those—"

Her companion made a slight gesture that arrested the name she would have uttered; and glancing at the boy, said, rather coldly:

"Yes, he is handsome, if his face was washed."

"Now, Ray," said the young lady, laughing, "that is altogether too bad. Those radiant eyes are destined to break many a heart yet."

"That they are!" mentally exclaimed the lad.

"How fortunate for some of your admirers, Ernie, he is not a few years older," said Ray (we may as well call him so at once, and have done with it). "Those dark, bright, handsome eyes wouldn't have left you the faintest trace of a heart; and then what would poor Ranty have done?"

"Pshaw, Ray," said Erminie, with a most becoming blush, "what nonsense! Oh, look! we are almost home. There is Dismal Hollow, and there—there—I declare! that's Mr. Toospegs himself, riding out of the pine woods. Why, he hasn't changed the least in the world since I saw him last."

The little driver gave his cap a pull further over his face as Ray shouted to Mr. Toospegs.

The next moment, that disconsolate woe was by the side of the gig, shaking hands with Ray and Erminie, and asking a dozen questions in a breath.

"How did you come! When did you come! How did you meet?" breathlessly demanded the astonished and delighted Mr. Toospegs.

"I called for Erminie at her convent. She is not going back any more; my visit will probably be a short one. I hope Miss Toospegs and all our friends are well?"

"Yes; all well. I am very much obliged to you. Did you pass through Judestown?"

"Of course. How else could we get here?"

"And didn't you meet Miss Pet?"

"Miss Lawless! No. Was she at Judestown?" said Erminie, eagerly; while Ray found something to attract among the trees that he could not possibly remove his eyes from it. "Oh, I should have liked to have seen her so much!"

"Yes; she went to Judestown this morning, and has not got back. My goodness! it is the greatest wonder you didn't see her. What a pity she didn't know you've come! she would be here in a flash."

"Is she to be married, do you know, Mr. Toospegs?" said Erminie, in a low voice; "we heard she was."

The little boy glanced from the corner of his eye, and saw a faint red on the dark cheek of the tall, handsome, Spanish-looking gentleman beside him.

Mr. Toospegs turned pale; even his very freckles turned the color of buttermilk curds at the question.

"Get married! Goodness gracious! I was just saying so. Oh, I knew very well she would go and leave herself away on somebody. Who is she going to be married to, Miss Minnie?"

"I don't know; it was this little boy who told us," said Erminie, glancing toward him.

"Well, I don't know, neither; only hear him tell, said the lad, shortly.

"Perhaps it is only a report. When will you come over to the cottage, Mr. Toospegs?"

"This evening, Miss Minnie; and I guess Aunt Priscilla will come, too. She hasn't had any new caps or collars since you went away, and has ever so many to get made."

"Very well; I will make them. Good-by, till then," said Erminie, smiling, as they drove on.

A short time sufficed to bring them to the cottage.

The driver was invited in, but declined, and turned to go.

"If you see Miss Lawless on your way, will you tell her to hurry here?" said Erminie, as she alighted.

"Yes! all right!" said the boy, closing his hand over the coin Ray gave him; and then touching his cap to Erminie, dashed away.

Lucy's delight exceeded all bounds at beholding "young marm's" and "misses" again; and then Ray and Erminie, with some difficulty, extricated themselves from her violent caresses, went up-stairs, and entered the room of Keturah.

Many and sad were the changes years, and sorrow, and a sort of chronic remorse for her past acts had wrought in her. She sat in a large easy-chair, unable to move any portion of her body but her head; her hair, dark, grim face, bony, sharp, and hollow, the protruding bones just covered by a wrinkled covering of skin; but the fierce, blazing black eyes were still unchanged.

Erminie, with the exclamation, "My dearest grandmother!" went over, and throwing her snowy arms around her neck, kissed the dark, withered cheek.

The old woman glanced at her, and saw the now beautiful, feminine, but perfect image of Lord Ernest Villiers. The same large, dark, on golden hair; the same clear, transparent complexion; the same elegant, graceful movements; the very expression of the features complete. All her old hatred revived at the sight of the lovely, high-born girl. With a quick, fierce gesture, she pushed her aside, and strove to glance around for the other she expected.

Ray stepped forward, and touched his lips tenderly to her forehead.

Holding his hand, she made him stand off where she could the better see him; and then she scrutinized him from head to foot. There, before her, he stood, the living embodiment of what her son had been at his age, the very image of him she had so passionately loved and so sadly lost. She could scarcely persuade herself that Reginald had not risen from the grave to meet her again. There was his very gipsy skin, and eyes of darkened fire; the curling locks of jet, and tall, princely form; but the expression of the mouth was different; his smile was Erminie's, exactly; and altogether there was a strong, undefined, puzzling resemblance between them, that for a moment darkly clouded the brow of the gipsy as she observed it. The only being in the wide world who was for now, was Ray. Erminie might win all other hearts, but the gipsy Keturah's was as flint to her. She had hated her from the first; she hated her still; she would hate her until the last, for the sake of the race from which she sprung.

Seeing she was not wanted, Erminie left the room to change her traveling-dress; and Ray, seating himself beside his grandmother, proceeded to tell her of his studies, his progress, his hopes and ambition for the future. One name he did not mention, that of Pet Lawless; and yet it was thrilling and vibrating at his heart-strings, as he listened impatiently for the quick, sharp clatter of her horse's hoofs.

But hours passed, and she came not; and Ray, angry at himself for caring or feeling so deeply disappointed, descended to join Erminie at the tea-table.

"What is Miss Lawless to me?" was the impetuous thought that sent the fiery blood creeping to his brow. "She an heiress, and I a pauper—a beggar, with the tainted gipsy blood in my veins. We were friends—something more, perhaps—in the years that have passed; but neither of us understood our relative positions, then. No; proud as she is, she shall never know I have dared to lift my eyes to her father's daughter. I was a fool to come on here at all. I have heard she has driven

dozens of better men crazy with her witchery; and can I rely on my own strength to shield me from her arts? Pshaw! she will not think it worth while, though, to stoop to flirt with me. I, a menial, educated by the bounty of her uncle. I am safe enough, and will think of her no more."

A very laudable resolution it was, on the young gentleman's part, but one which he found some difficulty in carrying out, inasmuch as Mr. and Miss Toospegs and Admiral Havenful came in just then; and after the first greetings were over, the whole conversation turned on Pet, her tricks, frolics, flirtations, capers, and caprices; and Ray found himself listening with an intense eagerness that he was half inclined to be enraged at himself for feeling.

Then, just as night was falling, the gallop of a horse was heard coming through the forest road; and, a few minutes later, Pet alighted at the gate, darted up the walk, burst, like the impetuous little whirlwind she was, into the cottage, clasped Erminie in her arms, and kissed her again and again, until Ray—though nothing earthly would have made him own it, even to himself—would have given untold wealth to have stood in his sister's gaiters.

Three somewhat furious embraces, that quite took away Erminie's breath, being over, Miss Lawless found time to glance at the rest of the company, and seeing Ray, as he stood, tall, and dark, and silent, by the window, went over and held out her hand.

There was something more nearly approaching to timidity in the action, and in the quick and quicker dropping of her resplendent eyes than any one had ever seen Pet manifest before. Ray bent over the little dark hand, whose touch sent a quick, sudden thrill to his inmost heart, and thought that, in all his life, he had never seen any one so beautiful as she looked then, with her veiled eyes, and drooping ringlets, and long, waving plumes that bent over her hat, touching her glowing cheeks as if enamored of the darkly splendid face beneath.

"Humph! A cold welcome, my little Mother Cary's Chicken," grunted the admiral. "Why don't you kiss him like you did Snow-drop? That's no way to welcome a friend you haven't seen for three whole blessed years."

Ray's eyes met hers, and the color flushed to her very brow; then, withdrawing her hand, she tossed her saucy head till all her jetty curls flashed and sparkled, and throwing herself into a seat, began talking to Erminie, as if for a wager.

"Who told you we were come?" asked Erminie.

"No one," said Pet. "It was an inspiration from on high, I expect, that told me I should find you here."

"It's a wonder you did not see us at Judestown; we remained there some time."

"Well, how do you know I didn't see you?" said Pet.

"Why, you surely—oh, Pet! did you see us, and never spoke?" said Erminie, reproachfully.

"Well, I was otherwise engaged, you know—in fact, there was a young gentleman, a very young gentleman, in the case—and I couldn't very well have presented myself any sooner than I did," said Pet.

"One of her lovers," thought Ray, with a curling lip.

"Guess what the little boy, who drove us over, told us about you, Pet!" said Erminie, laughing.

"What! Nothing naughty, I hope."

"Well, I don't know; that's as it may be. I tell you what he said."

"Of course; I like to hear what people say about me."

"Well, then, he said you were going to be married."

"Not possible! What an astounding revelation! Did you think I was going to be an old maid?"

"Then it is true! Is it any harm to ask who the happy man is, Pet?"

"Well, I haven't quite decided yet. I have some four or five on trial, and I generally put them through a severe course of martyrdom every day. The one who survives it (not more than one can possibly survive it), I shall probably make miserable for life, by bestowing upon him my hand—and heart. I was going to say, only, fortunately, they forgot to give me one when I was made."

Erminie laughed, and then the conversation became general, and two hours imperceptibly slipped away. Ray having wrought himself up to the belief that Miss Lawless was a heartless flirt, worthy of no higher feeling than contempt, he, in order to resist the dark witchery of her magnetic eyes, wrapped himself up in his very oldest mantle of pride, and addressed just as little of his conversation to her as he possibly could, without being positively rude. Pet, as proud in her own way as herself, noticed this at once, and her cheeks flushed, and her eyes flashed, for a moment, with anger and pride.

Then these signs of emotion passed away, and she grew her own cool, careless self again, talking away recklessly, and laughing contentedly at all sentiment, until Ray was more than ever convinced that the world had spoiled her, and that she was as arrant a coquette as ever made a fool of a sensible man.

As they arose to go, Ray, feeling himself bound in courtesy, offered to escort her home, but Pet coldly and curtly declined; and vaulting into her saddle, dashed off at a break-neck pace, madly reckless even for her.

Looking back once, she caught a glimpse of a tall, dark form leaning against a tree with folded arms and watching her still. Did she, with her light, sparkling, thoughtless nature, realize the struggle going on in that young heart, between love and pride, at that moment?

Of course, the arrival of Ray and Erminie precluded her "exploring expedition," as she called it, to the sea-shore. The next morning, and part of the afternoon, were spent with Erminie; but reaching home a little before sunset, she suddenly remembered it, and started off on the spur of the moment, like a female Don Quixote, in search of adventures.

"It's too late to begin a regular search," thought Pet, as she ran down the bank leading to the shore, "so I'll just have a look round the place, and come back some other day, and have a real good hunt for smugglers."

Fifteen minutes brought her to the beach, and there she paused to look round. The sands for a long distance out were bare; but the tide was slowly tramping inward. On the other hand, a huge wall of beetling rocks and projecting crags met the eye; and these walls of rock were so smooth and perpendicular, and so dizzyly high, that the boldest sailor, used to climbing all his life, would have hesitated before attempting to clamber up. There were two paths leading to the shore—the one Pet had just descended, and another about half a mile distant. Between these the massive wall of rock chose to indulge itself in a sudden impetuous rush out, forming a huge projecting shoulder, which a cat could hardly have climbed safely. The tide always covered this a considerable length of time before it could reach the sands on either side, so that a person caught at high tide on

either side found himself cut off from crossing over to the opposite side, unless he had a boat, or could swim.

"Now," thought Pet, "I'll have to look sharp and not let the tide catch me on the other side of that bluff, there, or if I do, I'll have a walk of half a mile along the beach to the other road, and after that over a mile to get home, which is a promenade I am not anxious for. I might swim across, it is true, but swimming with all one's clothes on is not the pleasantest or safest thing in the world; and all the smugglers this side of Pompey's Pillar are not worth the cold I would catch. I'll just walk over and look at the rocks, and then come back again."

Following up this intention, Pet walked slowly along, scanning the high, dark, frowning rocks with a curious eye. As far as she could see, there was not the slightest trace of an opening anywhere; yet the people said that some place along the shore the smugglers had a rendezvous. Pet's keen eyes detected every fissure large enough to hold a mouse, but no trace of secret cave or hidden cavern could be seen.

"I might have known it was all nonsense," said Pet, mentally. "The notion of finding an underground cave full of robbers and jewels, and all that sort of thing, is too much like a play, or a story in the 'Arabian Nights,' to be natural. However, as the night's fine, I'll just go on and look on the other side of the bluff."

By this time she had reached the high projecting bowlders, and she paused for a moment to glance at the sea. It was still several yards distant, and Pet felt sure she could go down some distance, and return again before the rising tide would bar her passage.

The sun had set and there was no moon; but the starlight was bright and the sea-breeze cool and invigorating; so Pet, in high spirits, talked on. Here and there she could catch the white sail of some boat, skimming over the waves; but the long beach was lonely and deserted.

"Well, I guess I may as well turn back now," said Pet, half aloud. "I am afraid my search after smugglers is going to be unsuccessful, after all. I haven't caught anything this evening, that's certain."

"But something has caught you, pretty one," said a voice, close behind her, so close and sudden that Pet jumped round with a startled ejaculation, and found herself face to face with her sometime tutor and discarded lover, Rozzel Garnet.

His face was flushed, his eyes were gleaming with triumph, as he laid one powerful hand on her shoulder, and held her fast.

In one instant the whole danger of her situation flashed upon Pet. She had made this man her deadly enemy; he had probably long waited for an opportunity for revenge—here she was, completely in his power, alone on the long, dreary, deserted beach, where her cries, if she uttered any, could reach no ear. Above her towered the high, precipitous, beetling rocks that she could not climb; on the other hand, spread out the boundless ocean, more merciful than him into whose hands she had fallen.

Like lightning, it all passed through her mind, and for one moment she quailed. But then her brave heart rose; this was no time for puerile fears, and she faced round, drew up her slight form to its full height, and met her enemy with a dauntless eye.

"Good-evening, Mr. Garnet," she said, composedly. "This is an unexpected pleasure. We thought you had gone away."

"Ah! did you! Gone where, Miss Lawless?" he said, with a sinister smile.

"Well—anywhere—to the county jail, as likely as not; but people don't always get their deserts in this world."

"Very true, Miss Pet; but you are, at present, in a fair way to get yours."

"Humph! You'll allow me to differ from you there, I hope; so permit me to wish you a very good-evening, Mr. Garnet."

"Not so fast, Miss Lawless; you must do your humble servant the honor of conferring your company upon him for a few days. As I have not seen you for so long a time, it would be highly impolite, not to say cruel, to hasten away so soon now."

"Indeed! Mr. Garnet—in-deed!" said Pet, arching her brows. "Your lesson in the library did not cure you, I see. Are you aware there is such a thing as a jail in Judestown, where refractory gentlemen who threaten a change of air? Really, Mr. Garnet, I think a little wholesome correction would not hurt you in the least."

"No, Miss Lawless, I have not forgotten that scene in the library of your father's house," said Garnet, tightening his grasp, till Pet winced with pain. "My hand bears the mark of your sharp teeth yet; and as I am deeply your debtor for that Judas-kiss, I shall pay you in your own coin before either of us are many hours older. Did you think how near retribution was when you gave me that sharp caress, Miss Lawless?"

"Sharp caress! I suppose that means a bite. If you're not anxious to test their sharpness again, Mr. Garnet, you'd best let go my arm. Faith! I wish I had made one of my servants horseshow you from my gates, that day; you would not have dared to come sneaking round like a white-livered coward, that you are—now!"

"Petronilla Lawless, take care!" he hissed, with a fierce gleam of his eye.

"Take care of what? I'm not afraid of you, Rozzel Garnet," flashed Pet. "Anything in the shape of a man who would go round playing the spy on an unprotected girl, has sunk rather low to be feared by me. Take care, you! I vow! if there is such a thing as a coward in the country, I shall have you thrashed for this, within an inch of your cowardly life."

"And get your attached friend, the gipsy beggar, to administer it—eh, Miss Lawless?" he said, with the smile of a fiend. "What a pity he is not here, like a true knight-errant, to rescue his lady-love!"

"It's well for you he's not, or he wouldn't leave a whole bone in your miserable skin. Let me go, I tell you! Your presence is pollution," said Pet, struggling to get free.

He held her with a grasp of iron, and watched her ineffectual efforts with a grim smile. "I told you when we would meet again you would plead to me," he said, with an evil gleam of his snake-like eyes. "That time has come."

"Has it, indeed?" said Pet. "Well, if you have heard or are likely to hear me pleading to anybody under heaven, I must say you have a wonderful pair of ears. I have read of a gentleman called Fine-ear, who could hear the grass growing; but, upon my word, he couldn't hold a candle to you!"

"The time will come, girl, when you will grovel and plead at my very feet, only to be spurned!"

"Now, Mr. Garnet, look here," said Pet; "you're plaguing a story out of 'The Arabian Nights' entertainments. You needn't think to palm it off on me as original, for I've read it, as well as you, and know all about

the glass merchant, who fancied he would marry the vizier's daughter, and have her kneeling at his feet, just as I am to do at your royal highness's, you know; and then he would very ungraciously give her a kick, and in so doing smashed his basket of glass all to pieces. You needn't think to take me in, you see; for my education has not been neglected more than your own."

"Cease this fooling," said Garnet, angrily. "and come with me. Resistance is useless. You are completely in my power, and may as well come quietly."

"I won't then! Not a step will I budge, if I die for it!" said Pet, planting her feet fairly in the yielding sand. "I am not in the habit of walking out with gentlemen at this hour of the evening, I would have you to know."

"Come on, come on, this rock shall fly from its firm base as soon as I."

And Pet, with an undaunted look, that would have made her fortune as a virtuous heroine in difficulties on the stage, looked unflinchingly in his face, though her stout heart was throbbing as she each moment more and more clearly saw her danger.

"Then I shall make you, by—!" And he swore a fearful oath, while a terrible frown settled on his face. "Since you will not walk, I shall bind you hand and foot and have you carried. Scream as loud as you like," he added, grimly; "there is no one far or near to hear you."

Holding her still with one hand, he began fumbling in his pockets, probably in search of something to bind her hands and feet. Pet cast a quick, sweeping glance around. Along the beach not a living soul was to be seen, and even the boats were now out of sight. They were close to the bowlder, around which the waves were now seething and dashing; and the tide was rapidly advancing to where they stood. Pet had her back to the bowlder, while he stood facing it, thus weighing her into a narrow prison, with the high, steep rocks on one side, and the dashing sea on the other, and preventing all hope of escaping by running along the beach.

His eye followed hers, and he said, with a triumphant chuckle:

"Caged, my bird of paradise! Shared, my mountain eagle! Trapped, my forest fairy! Won, my dauntless lady-love! Ha! ha! ha! Your ever-triumphant star has set, at last, my beautiful, black-eyed bride."

Standing between her and all hope of escape, he ventured to relax his grasp for a moment, to aid in the search for something to bind her with. In one second, like a bolt from a bird, she darted forward, and with one wild, flying leap, impossible to anything but desperation, she sprang sheer into the foaming waters and vanished!

Vanished but for an instant. Pet could swim like a fish, or a cork, or a mermaid, or anything else you please, while Mr. Rozzel Garnet had as intense an aversion to cold water as a sufferer from hydrophobia. As quickly as she had disappeared did her black curls glitter above the white foam again, as she daintily struck out for the shore.

She had not far to swim, and she buffeted the waves like a sea-goddess; so, while Mr. Rozzel Garnet stood stunned, speechless, paralyzed, she had gained the shore, fled as fast as her dripping clothes would permit her along the beach, rushed up the path, then back again on the rocks up above, until she stood directly over the spot where the foiled villain still remained, as if rooted to the ground, unable to comprehend which end he was standing on, to use a strong figure of speech.

"Hallo, Mr. Garnet! how do you find your salt?" shouted Pet, from above. "Oh my! how beautifully you did it! My stars! you ought to have a leather medal presented to you for catching girls—you do it so cleverly."

He turned and looked up; and there, in the dusk, bright starlight, he saw Pet all dripping like a Naiad, and her black eyes almost out-flashing the stars themselves.

"Curses light on her!" he hissed between his teeth.

"Thank you, Mr. Garnet! Curses, like chickens, come home to roost, you know. Ah, you did it—didn't you?" said Pet, provokingly. "Don't you wish you had me, though? It's slippery work holding eels, and dangerous to play with exploding bombshells, and stinging occupation-pulling nett

tone, widely different from her usual soft, almost languid utterance.

"I promised to visit you again, to tell you why you are here, a captive, as you choose to term it. Well, here I am, ready to redeem my pledge, if you still require it."

"If you will—will be so kind," faltered Edna, shrinking back from that burning glance.

"Kind! You will find little kindness in me, girl, even when I am at my best. To-day Satan himself might envy me my mood. What I tell you will be the plain truth, unvarnished. If it displeases you, blame yourself."

Edna drew back as Isabella sank down upon the pallet. Despite her natural courage, the maiden felt ill at ease in the presence of this passionate woman. Yet such was her anxiety to learn all that she replied:

"I do claim your promise. Tell me why I was brought here—what I have done to deserve this treatment."

"What have you done!—rather what have you not done! But there—I will not amuse you by getting hot. So—listen, now. First, you are here by your father's connivance."

Edna started, and was about to speak, but a quick, impatient gesture bade her hold her peace.

"When I am through, you can say what you please—until then, listen. I said that your father knew all about your abduction beforehand, and I speak no more than the truth. To do him justice, he made some objections, but I overruled them. What I say is his law. Why? Well, he is in my power—or that of my brother, which amounts to the same thing. It is just possible that he may never have told you the story—men are so modest! But I told you I was in the mood for plain speech this evening, so listen:

"There was a man named Gessel Dick, who made a fortune in the mines. He was robbed—almost murdered at the same time. Judge Lynch took hold of the affair, and only for the thief would have suffered. I gave him shelter, though unwittingly, at the time; I learned all afterward. Gessel Dick was not killed, then, and soon recovered his strength, though never his mind. He had only one idea; that of finding his murderer, as he termed it. Whether he had any suspicions of the truth or no, he seemed to have struck the right trail, and the criminal grew uneasy. The devil still so well with the man, one day he found Gessel Dick fighting with a huge bear. He raised his rifle and fired, just as the gray man drove his knife to the hilt in the brute's heart. Both fell dead—Gessel Dick with a bullet through his brain."

"The murderer fled, little thinking there had been an eye-witness to his crime. That night my brother made him his slave. The murderer was obliged to sign a complete confession of the deed—of the robbery as well as murder; he gave my brother the only clue he had to the buried treasure—a chart of the spot where he had hidden the gold stolen from Gessel Dick, when the hot and persistent search made him afraid of its being traced home to him. That man—the murderer of Gessel Dick—was Eli Brand, your father!"

Edna sunk to the floor with a groan of agony. She never doubted the woman's truth—it chimed in too well with the confession of her father that night at the hotel, she knew, too, that Pacific Pete was none other than Vincente Barada, the man whom Brand said could hang him as a murderer.

"I warned you that my talk would not be soft as rose-leaves nor sweet as honey," laughed Isabella. "However, you know now why your worthy parent lent himself to further our plans—simply because brother threatened to hand him over to the miners—to Mark Austin, the son of the man called Gessel Dick!"

The revengeful woman laughed gleefully as she saw how Edna writhed with agony at these startling words. To think that he—the man whom she loved with all her young heart—should be the son of her father's victim. Oh, it was horrible!

"I see you are interested," added Isabella, finding an almost fiendish satisfaction in tormenting her victim. "That is well; I have something more to tell you. Doubtless you would like to learn why I—for in this matter brother has acted only as my agent—why I have taken so much trouble to bring you here. I am in a communicative mood this evening, fortunately."

"But first, let me tell you what story was spread about concerning your disappearance. You were said to have been abducted by three men; so far the truth answered. Those three men were—Mark Austin, his partner Pike, and an old man—or a young one in disguise, as I strongly suspect—who calls himself Old Business. The alarm was given, the report spread, and Judge Lynch paid their cabin a visit. Never mind what passed there—enough that suspicion will never touch the right party."

"What were my reasons? Well, I did not intend telling you the whole truth, but there's a devil in me to-night, and you will never have the chance to triumph over me. If I have failed, so will have you."

"You fell in love with Mark Austin—bah! why blush? He is not here to go into ecstasies over your mock-modesty. You fell in love with him, and—I'll be frank—he was just as foolish as you. Curses on the day that first he saw you! Only for that I might have been happy—oh! so happy!"

Isabella now gave evidence of another phase in her wild, impulsive nature. From being hoarse and harsh with rage, her voice grew soft and broken, and bowing her head she wept bitterly. Only for a few moments. Then, proudly raising her head, she tossed back the disheveled hair, dashed the pearly drops from her flushed cheeks, and laughed bitterly in scorn at her own weakness.

"Bah! I was actually growing sentimental—I! But, after all, 'tis as well. That little outburst will save words. You know now that I fell in love with this wonderful miner as well as yourself. You remember last Sabbath? Doubtless you marked it with a white stone in your calendar. Well, that same evening he spent with me, in my room. Ha! that touched you! 'Tis true, though. Could you only have seen us at one moment—when I laid in his arms, heart to heart, his lips glued to mine—would your dreams have been quite so pleasant? I think not."

"And yet—why should I lie to you? No; I will play fair, since you can never take advantage of my confession. 'Twas only for a moment that he yielded. Then, I suppose he thought of you. He grew cold and distant. I—like a fool—had lost my head, or all might have been different. I laid myself at his feet. I did not ask so much—only his love, which I could return two thousand fold. I suppose the idea shocked his Puritanic scruples; at any rate, he coldly rejected my love. There! 'tis out at last, and I feel the better for having spoken. Only—you shall never triumph over my disgrace."

"You can easily guess, now, my reasons for abducting you, and accusing him. I wanted

you out of the way; wanted to have him in my power. I have succeeded in both. Now for the next move."

"I have sent for a particular friend of yours—one who adores the very ground you pretty foot touches. He will come here tomorrow. Thirty hours from this, you will be his bride."

Edna interrupted her with a sharp cry. Imperiously waving her hand, Isabella commanded silence. Weak, heart-broken, Edna obeyed.

"I mean to be generous. It will be a genuine bride. Though the gentle bridegroom is a Catholic and you a Protestant, both parties can be satisfied, for we have a priest and a Methodist minister in our band; each of them has consented to perform the ceremony. 'Twill be a pity if, between them, they can not marry you so firmly that all further thought of Mark Austin will be a sin. Then—I have given you enough to think about, for once. Now, I must leave you, to visit Mark. Don't you envy me?" and the woman arose with a bitter laugh.

"Wait—I forgot to mention the name of the happy man who is to call you wife. And you would let me go without one question? What a shy little bird it is! Well—listen. The much-to-be-envied man is—Juan Cabrera."

"Never!" cried Edna, with a sudden return of her natural spirit. "I'll die first!" "I believe you would, just to spite me; but that is impossible. You will be watched every moment, from this. Remember—to-morrow night!" and with a loud laugh, Isabella left the chamber.

CHAPTER XXV. BOON COMPANIONS.

"GENTLEMEN—comrades," cried Marco of the Scar, in a clear, ringing voice, as he sprang to his feet, a battered tin cup in his hand. "I'll give you a sentiment—up, all of you and drink uncovered. The man who refuses it, calls me his enemy. Drink—to the truest comrade, the boldest heart, the kindest friend and leader, the most dangerous enemy—drink to the prince of free riders, JOAQUIN MURIELA!"

The toast was drunk in silence, with bared heads, and—in more than one case—moistened eyes. The true history of Joaquin Muriela will never be written. To most ears the name means only a ferocious, bloodthirsty outlaw. The terrible wrongs he suffered, and which drove him to the bad; his brother and brother-in-law murdered; himself cruelly flogged; his young wife outraged and murdered—Joaquin robbed and left for dead; all this before he committed a single crime. If he waded knee deep in blood, had he no justification? At heart his comrades believed he had. To them he was a demi-god.

But this momentary emotion soon passed by. The outlaws were in for a night's spree, and this event occurred so rarely that they could not afford to lose much time in regretting the dead and gone. A deputation, headed by Wister, had waited upon Pacific Pete, and requested permission to celebrate the admission of so skillful a comrade as Marco of the Scar, with an old-fashioned drinking bout. The chief consented, after detaining men to act as outside guards.

Gathered in the large chamber, the men began their revels, after Marco of the Scar gave his toast. 'Twas a free and easy scene. No tables, no chairs; a number of robes and skins were flung upon the floor. Upon these the two score men were stretched. A ten-gallon keg of whisky stood in the center. Upon this Wister sat, as master of the revels. He it was who turned the faucet and filled the tin, pewter, or horn cups as often as he deemed fit.

The party, considering its rough elements, was wonderfully quiet and decorous. Wister had cautioned them that the chief was in an ill-humor, and would stand little disturbance.

Marco of the Scar was soon the life of the party. He proved himself as skillful in conversation and repartee as skillful with the knife and pistol. Yarn after yarn did he reel off until he had the field pretty much to himself, the rest contenting themselves with listening, and an occasional comment now and then.

"Gentlemen, this is an anniversary," said Marco; "come; drink to the past!"

The toast was duly honored, then Marco resumed.

"Yes—an anniversary, and I will tell you of what. If the story be a dry one, all the better, since we are here for drinking. If it prove too tiresome, check me."

"I am a Spaniard by birth and family, though raised in New Orleans. My life had nothing out of the common in it until I was twenty. Then I fell in love—as the phrase runs—with and married a bewitching little morsel from the French quarter. I was green enough, then; I only saw that she had a soft, lustrous eye, ripe red lips, and a figure that was a complete edition of love itself; so I married her, after two days' acquaintance. But if I required no more, my parents did. Of 'blue blood' themselves, they could have forgiven any other sin—but this, never. Actually Nina could not swear that she had ever had a father."

"The old story—angry father—disinherited son; a parting curse by way of blessing, and then we each went our way, for I would not give up my little one. Still I felt the blow bitterly, for being an only son, I had been petted and made much of, all my life. So, to drown memory, I spent the night at the tables. When day dawned, I found myself the winner of nearly twenty thousand dollars. I tossed it all into Nina's lap. No, she did not get tired of love's young dream."

"That night's success decided me. I set up a gambling-house. Luck favored me; I made good by thousands; in six months I was the richest man in New Orleans."

"The cards can not run forever in one channel—a change must come, sooner or later. Mine came in this wise. A stranger—one of such remarkable appearance that, interested, I sought to discover who he could be, but in vain; this stranger visited my table regularly every night, remaining just an hour, then disappearing, generally the winner, for he betted with good judgment and steady nerve."

"One morning I went home, but found it cold and deserted. A little note from Nina told me all. She was weary playing the role of dutiful wife; she had eloped with her 'first love.'"

"That little scrap of paper changed me wonderfully, gentlemen. I was no longer the soft, confiding fool. I vowed vengeance upon them both; you shall see how well I kept my oath."

"'Twas nearly a week before I could fairly strike their trail. When I did, I found that this 'first love' of Nina's was none other than my 'unknown.' You wouldn't care for the details; of how I trailed them, day after day,

through England, France, then back to America. At last I run the game to earth, near Jalapa, in Mexico. And there, for the first time, I learned who my man really was: Tiburcio Vasquez—King of the Jarochos, he was called."

"Time, hard drinking, and brooding over the insult cast upon me, had wrought a great change in my personal appearance. This, with a careful disguise, insured me against detection. I soon made the acquaintance of one of the band, and through him asked to be admitted here to-day—to cope with any or all of their best men, at their own game. I was given the chance. I defeated every man who was pitted against me. I was elected a member, unanimously, though the chief seemed to have his doubts—just as our noble captain acted this afternoon—he could give no reasons for crossing the will of his men, and so I became 'one of them.' Again, like now, we all gathered together for a carouse; but here the resemblance stops."

"At midnight I was the only one left sober, among the men. I stole away, and soon found the quarters of the chief—and Nina. I seized and bound him. Nina, recognizing me, lay like one dead with fear, never making a sound. I bound her, as well. Then I told them all: how I had followed them ever since that black day, watching and waiting for the moment to strike. It had come at last."

"I carried them outside the house. I bound them to the two pillars in front. They shrieked aloud, but no one came to their assistance. The men were drunk—drugged in a sleep that would last for hours."

"Well—I applied the torch. Dry as tinder, the little building was in a furious blaze the next moment. Seated before them, I smoked my cigar. I recalled the past. Reminded them of the honor they had stolen from me when I was busy making a fortune for her. Well—I never relented for one moment."

"In half an hour, all was over. That was thirteen years ago. Gentlemen, again—to the past!"

The ball was kept rolling. One by one the outlaws narrated their experience; in all, a catalogue of sins that would have shamed the Newgate Calendar. The liquor flowed freely, and the men were fast becoming uproarious, when the outlaw chief appeared and sternly ordered them to give over drinking.

"You are making noise enough to wake the dead. There—there will be need of cool heads and steady hands soon—perhaps to-morrow. Remember—I don't speak twice," and he passed on to inspect the sentinels in person.

Marco of the Scar had attached himself to Collar-and-elbow; it seemed as though the tough struggle they had had inspired respect, if not admiration. At any rate, in their cups they swore eternal friendship.

The Irishman insisted upon the new recruit's choosing his couch, and together they reeled toward it, in a dark corner. Once there, after cautioning his comrade, Marco produced a large leather flask of liquor. The bait was tempting—doubtless, since 'twas forbidden, and the comrades were soon busily engaged devouring its contents; at least Collar-and-elbow was. It seemed as though Marco was bent on still further increasing the resemblance between his story and the present.

Collar-and-elbow soon succumbed; a heavy snore told that he was asleep. Marco cautiously gazed around. All was still, save for sundry heavy breathings. The lights burned dim. Everything seemed propitious.

Feeling of his weapons, he noiselessly crawled away in the darkness. He had evidently made good use of his eyes that night, for he seemed never at a loss. Entering one of the dark passages, he glided along it, a bare knife in his hand, the other slipping along the uneven stone wall.

Presently a faint light glimmered before him. Stealthily, noiselessly as an Indian upon the war-path, he crept along, then paused at the entrance of the small chamber. A faint sound of breathing came to his ears. He crept forward. A woman was lying upon the rude couch of skins. Holding his breath, he glided to her side. One arm covered her face. She moved restlessly, and the hand dropped. Her brow was moist, a look of pain upon her pale features.

"Father—have mercy—spare me!"

Quick as thought Marco leaped back, into the darkness, believing himself discovered. But Edna had only spoken from out a troubled dream.

He retraced his steps, and entered another passage. It also conducted him to a chamber, though unlighted. He listened. All was still. He entered. No sound of breathing; the chamber was vacant. Ha! A faint sound came to his ears, just as he was retreating. He listened: again that sound, like a half-stifled groan.

He followed the sound, cautiously. He stopped as his hand touched a silken curtain. It hung before an opening as he quickly discovered. Pushing it aside, still all was dark. The groaning, sighing sound came still plainer. He hesitated; a clammy dew moistened his brow. But then, as if drawn on by some invisible hand, he crawled on.

The strange sound no longer guided him. He listened. All was still. Yet he could not retreat. He seemed fascinated—by what, he could not have told. He crawled on.

A faint sound startled him; but it came from his rear. He glanced back. A faint light shone through the silken drapery. Some one had entered the outer chamber.

Believing himself caught, he sprang to his feet, and then—felt himself falling—down!

CHAPTER XXVI. THE WAGES OF SIN.

"YES, I sent for you. Sit down, and fill your glass."

The speaker was Pacific Pete, or, as he may henceforth be termed, Vincente Barada. He addressed Eli Brand, who stood before him, uncovered, sullen respect, not unmixed with fear, written plainly upon his dark countenance.

"Drink—success to all our plans! And now—your attention. Of course you know that I did not request your company through pure love; you wouldn't believe me to I to swear it. We know each other too well to attempt wearing the mask while alone."

"What is it you want of me," suddenly muttered Brand.

"Good! you are in the humor I like best—short and sweet. There will be less difficulty in our coming to terms. But first—you see this bit of paper?"

While speaking the outlaw chief produced a small note-book, and from it extracted a worn and discolored slip of paper, bearing several lines of writing, beneath a rude diagram. This he passed before Eli Brand's eyes, laughing softly.

Brand's face flushed hotly, then turned pale as death. A hoarse, inarticulate cry broke from his lips as he snatched desperately at the

bit of paper. But it was dextrously withdrawn, and a sharp, significant click recalled his senses, as a black-muzzled revolver almost touched his temple. Again laughing softly, Barada said:

"No, no, dear friend—have patience. You see I have not forgotten with whom I am dealing. Back, I say! down in your chair this instant, or by the devil, my master, I'll see what your brains are made of!"

The abrupt change, the devilish glitter in Barada's eyes, awed Brand into submission, and he sank back into his chair, pale and trembling, though the devil-fire still smoldered in his small eyes.

"You must be mad, man, to attempt such a trick with me," sneered Barada. "Only that I have need of you—work for you to do—that act would have been your death. As it was, I could scarcely hold my hand. If you are not anxious to commit suicide, never tempt me again. You understand?"

"What do you want me to do?" sullenly muttered Brand.

"A difficult job; and yet, if you succeed, 'twill be the best rewarded act of your life. But wait. That there may be no chance of a mistake, let's take a retrospective glance. Ah! if black looks would only kill—but they won't, you know. So, take my advice. Smooth down your brow, and take matters philosophically. You'll live the longer for it," and Barada thoughtfully refilled his glass.

"But, as I was saying: the past. You remember the poor devil called Gessel Dick? Ah, I see you do. Good! Well, I have made a discovery concerning him. His name was John R. Austin—the R standing for Richard, whence his being nicknamed Dick. Mark Austin was his son. He had a brother, too—a roving, reckless, rolling stone. Though probably neither is aware of the other's purpose, both brother and son are here trying to sift the mystery of Austin's disappearance. Whether either of them have a suspicion of the actual truth, I don't know. But if they do strike the right trail, I wouldn't give much for your life. Ah, that touches you; I thought as much."

"Now, listen. This is what I am trying to get at. I hold here the confession of the—the man who murdered Gessel Dick; also, the only clue to the spot where the stolen gold was buried. Little wonder that you could not find the treasure; for I removed it to a safe spot. Easy—don't be a fool, man! I've got the drop on you this time; don't tempt me too far."

"This brother, if I mistake not, is none other than the man you know as Old Business. You can easily sum up your chances were I to pass this confession over to him. Whether I do or not, depends wholly upon you. I, too, have had dealings with this man; never mind what they were; the simple fact that I want him put out of the way is enough. Now you know the price of these bits of paper. You dispose of him, and you are a free man once more. Fail, and you are lost—doubly lost."

"You are sure of this man?" asked Brand, eagerly, his eyes dilating, a strange expression upon his weather-beaten features. "He is the—that man's brother?"

"Not sure—but confident. I don't think I can be mistaken, and—strange sight!—Pacific Pete trembled all over, his lips blanched as he cast a nervous glance behind him, as though dreading some vision of the past."

Brand's eyes glittered anew as he noted this, but his voice was even and steady as he added:

"You may think it strange, but now that I know the worst I am much easier in my mind. Come—the day for reserve between us is past. I'll tell you why I was so willing to join you in your plans against this man. You have always supposed Edna to be my own daughter, have you not? But she is not."

Brand was slowly tracing figures in the few drops of liquor that had been spilled upon the table. Mechanically he slowly traced out a name, letter by letter. Like one fascinated, Barada followed his finger with his eyes—a look of unutterable horror deepening on them as the name drew nearer completion. But Brand saw nothing of this. In a dull, monotonous tone he spoke on.

"No, she is no relation to me. Years ago I had a bosom friend; I loved him better than life, though he treated me more as a servant than a comrade. I know now that he had many secrets from me, while I believed he was as open and free to me as I was to him. One night he told me a story—a tale of reckless crime and treachery. Never mind the details; 'twould not interest you. Enough that the avenger was upon his trail. He gave me a bit of paper, and made me swear to carry his child away and use her as my own, in case anything should happen to him."

"He was still talking, when the door opened and a tall man sprang upon him. He gasped a name, then died. It all passed so quiet that I could not interfere. The murderer then turned upon me. I sprang through the window and fled. There was something in that handsome, yet satanic face, that unmanned me."

"I hastened to his house and bore away the child. I—but you are ill?" he hastily added, for the first time noticing the strange demeanor of his captain.

"No, no; go on," hoarsely whispered the outlaw chief.

"That's all. I'm a fool for babbling of my private affairs," and the old dogged look came back to Brand's face. "I only meant to tell you why I feared this old man. I believed him to be this man—who murdered my friend. But you have set me at ease. I will kill him, at your price. But, to prove your sincerity, give me at least one of those papers."

"You may have this," and Barada was once more his usual self, as he tossed the rude diagram over to Brand. "The confession shall be yours when you bring me plain proof that the man is dead. Now go."

"Give me the order to pass the guards. I feel the need of fresh air. And then I am anxious to get to work."

"I'll go to the entrance with you. Come."

Brand passed out of the cavern, and glided away in the night. The stars told him that he had several hours before day—enough for his work. When once out of sight of the cavern he halted in a deep hollow, and kindled a tiny fire. By its light he carefully examined the diagram, his eyes aglow with cupidty.

Then a glad cry broke from his lips. He had mastered the contents—had succeeded in comprehending the diagram. A strange thrill agitated his frame as he realized that at last the long-lost treasure was his; the blood-stained gold—the wages for which he had committed murder."

Extinguishing the fire, Brand clambered out of the hollow and hastened away from the spot. He was all of a tremble—a strange fire seemed working in his veins. With this man the lust of gold was a second nature. To it he had sacrificed prospects brighter than fall to the lot of most men. Love and friendship had been served alike—they were as naught in the balance against avarice. He had stained his hands in blood, had burdened his soul with a

terrible score of crime; yet he never regretted having done so—only bewailed the loss of his idolized gold.

"'Twill be mine—all mine now!" he muttered, as he hastened along the rough trail. "All mine—a fortune—a mass of the darling, precious gold; enough to enable me to end my days, far away from here, honored, respected. Shall I—and yet—?"

His pace slackened; his thoughts were busy. Until now he had resolved to secure his treasure, then to flee far away, severing all connection with the past. But now—he remembered Edna, the fair girl who had ever proved a true, a dutiful daughter to him. Besides gold, she alone had power to touch his heart. It seemed hard to desert her now, when she was in such sore need of a friendly support. And then he recalled each word that had dropped from the lips of Old Business in the shanty at Dick's Pocket. Not a night had passed since then, scarce an hour, but what he had dreamed of or pictured to himself that wonderfully rich pocket, until it seemed to belong by rights to himself. Should he flee, and forever abandon all hopes of possessing it?

"No, I'll kill him and have it all to myself!" he cried, in a hoarse, unnatural voice, unconscious that he spoke aloud. "The others are dead—all but Lynch. I can fool him—I will—"

A slight noise behind him checked the speech, and recalled Brand to a sense of his folly. In an instant he was his usual self—cool, wary and circumspect.

He listened intently. All was still, save for the usual sounds of the night. Then he proceeded, but with more caution than heretofore. The gray light was spreading in the east, heralding the coming dawn, when Brand paused in a little valley. Through it ran a small creek, but which, during the rainy season, almost filled the valley. Yet there was a landmark that couldn't be mistaken; a large, black boulder near the center of the valley. Below this he knelt and pried his bowie-knife with almost insane fury, flinging the dirt behind him in constant spurts.

And then! A harsh, inarticulate cry broke from his lips as the blade touched something hard. He tore it from its resting-place—a nugget of pure gold! Another and another, until he was surrounded by a ring of the dull, yellow metal—a ransom for a king.

Down still deeper he dug, and another cry parted his lips as he came upon a layer of long skin bags, heavy, because full of gold dust. The outlaw chief had not deceived him, then. This was, indeed, the blood-stained gold—the lost treasure of Gessel Dick.

"Rich—rich! I can roll in gold now!"

The speech ended with a yell of terror. A heavy hand rested upon Eli Brand's shoulder, a significant click sounded in his ear.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 296.)

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OF MONTHS AND DAYS.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

To be a well-conducted son
You must be born on Sunday.
My Scotch friend says to be a man
Your birthday must be Monday.

In writing satires I am sure
That Saturday is my day;
And when there's any fish to fry,
Good Catholics take Friday.

In asking for a maiden's hand,
If you'd not wish rejection,
I think the merry month of May
Would be the best selection.

But, maiden, if you wish to dash
Your lover's hopes, remember
The best of all months to say no,
Is certainly November.

When your old suit is well outworn,
And badly needs a new one,
Then hurry to the clothing-store
All in the month of Jewin'.

It to the wars I had to go
And fight (the bare thought smothered)
Then I'd take March and some one else
Might take the eleven others.

The best time in the year to tell
A story and be merry,
I'm very much inclined to think
Would be in February.

If I were in for making love,
And glances soft to bandy,
The best month I'd select would be
The first month that was handy.

One Mad Act.

A STORY OF CHRISTMAS-TIME.

BY JENNIE DAVIS BURTON.

CHRISTMAS, but as different from our ideas of Christmas-time as the antipodes.

A traveler had left Arica three days before, and was pushing on with a feverish restlessness through the mountain regions, sometimes following fragments of those grand old roads, lasting relics of the glorious days of the Incas, sometimes losing himself, as it seemed, in the very heart of the tropical forest. Everything there was of a magnificent scale. Giant palms reared their feathery heads high above the neighboring groves; trees gorgeous with flowers from top to bottom were stunted by comparison, and yet stood a hundred and fifty feet in the air; abrupt chasms yawned beneath until distance was lost in the eternal darkness of their unfathomable depths; and above, huge precipices rose one above another, like gigantic steps leading straight up into the very vault of heaven itself. Amid all the grandeur of the lower third of the mightiest mountain range in the world, the tops of whose sierras are lost amid eternal snows, where nature has put on the garb of the stupendous and sublime, this man had come, hoping to escape from that self-consciousness whose raging passions made his life a hell.

He had an Indian guide and a pack-mule for his train, but he had left both at the cabin where he had passed the night, and gone tramping quite alone up the steep, rocky path, which led through almost impenetrable wilds. It was Christmas-day, and all over the Christian world a *Te Deum* was being sung, "Peace upon earth and good will among men," was being preached from thousands of pulpits and instilled into millions of hearts.

It was a day full of happy, hopeful meaning, suggestive in numberless homes of bright hearthstones and the one family reunion of the year, of good cheer—the big brown pudding laid out in state, flanked by speckled pudding and great crystal flagons of cider, which froths and sparkles like champagne—of light froths and merry faces, of banks of pine and scarlet berries, of the tall Christmas-tree and the children's carnival.

It was to escape recollections of these had sent Randolph Braxton an aimless wanderer among the Andes; but memory is as remorseless as fate, and the picture of the Christmas past rose before him, blotting out tropical scenery and brilliant sunshine, and overwhelming his inner being with the blackness of desolation and despair.

He stood upon a plateau, which was scarcely more than a ledge, where bright emerald moss was piled a yard thick, on which the footsteps of an army would not have made a sound. He held his clasped hands toward heaven, and lifted his face, dark with sudden fury, and though he uttered no word it was as if he called down heaven's direst wrath upon his adversary.

And then, as he turned to retrace his steps through the vast solitude he found himself face to face with another man.

A man so like himself that but for the brooding shadow on Randolph Braxton's face, the one might have been taken for the other. The eyes of the two met, the newcomer half-recoiled with a look of horror, then recovered himself and took a step forward, holding out his hand.

"Dolph, old fellow!"

"Keep back," cried Randolph Braxton, hoarsely. "What brought you here? Satan must have sent you to tempt me, but the more fool you to have ever come! You might have known that you and I could not meet and both live. No simple chance has brought us face to face here. Why have you followed me?"

"To be reconciled to you, brother."

"Brother!" repeated the other, with a bitter sneer. "For one year I have owned no brother. You, traitor and dastard, I hate and abhor. My life has but one impulse left—to take revenge. Oh, cower and turn pale, fool! you have tempted your own fate."

"Randolph, are you mad? Listen to me."

"I listened to you once, to my lasting grief and desolation; your false tongue shall have no chance with me again. Go down upon your knees and ask heaven to receive your soul, if such a vain prayer will give you any comfort in your dying hour."

"Dolph, Dolph! You would not murder me in cold blood?"

"Would I not? It is no better than you deserve, but my life is not so desirable that I fear to risk it in giving you a chance for yours. Are you armed? Take this. We will take three paces from this spot, turn and fire when I give the word. Pick up that pistol and do as I say. I swear I will shoot you in your tracks like the dog you are if you refuse."

He had flung the weapon at the other's feet, and he, hesitating, could do no less than obey that last, imperious command.

"Heaven bear witness that you force me to this," he cried, in great agitation.

The only answer which his brother vouchsafed was to motion him to his place. A moment later two pistol shots rung sharply upon the air, and then Randolph Braxton stood upon the ledge alone. The other had thrown up his hands and staggered back, with a single groan had fallen—fallen headlong down the abyss. What was the story in the lives of those two which led to that tragical end, it follows.

"And that is your home, Aglae. What will your friends say to receiving me? Oh, I am afraid!"

"Afraid!" laughed Aglae Braxton, merrily. "My dear, I am the only daughter of the house, and you are my guest. When that is said, enough is said. On that recommendation, since see dat sweet face onct more, you cordially, mamma will take you to her arms, and nobody will ask any questions. Here we are, and welcome to Braxtonia."

Braxtonia itself was a Virginian estate; the house long and low, by no means a stately or imposing structure, but roomy and comfortable, and overflowing with holiday guests.

"We have worn out their patience by being the latest arrival, I suppose, and nobody is on the lookout for us," said Aglae, springing down from the carriage, and leading the way into the covered porch. "Oh, here is a sign of life at last—one of our boys, Justina. Neal, how dare you! Put me down instantly, sir!"

A tall young fellow coming out of the dim hall had caught her up as he would have done a child.

"How do, sis? It is you at last. We were about giving you up as one among the missing, and the governor was seriously reflecting whether he should advertise 'Lost, strayed or stolen, a little brown girl, with a red dress and a horrible temper. Marked with seven freckles on her nose, with a catty propensity for scratching, and a happy knack of pulling hair.' I inclined to the belief that you had deluded some unfortunate youth into an elopement, but mamma—bless her credulous heart!—stuck to it stoutly that your affection for French and geometry would not permit you to tear yourself away from the scene of your enticing studies, though, like the last rose of summer, she should bloom there alone. Oh, if you insist in that dignified tone, down you go, of course. I beg your friend's pardon."

"Miss Talcott, Neal. Never mind my wild brother, Justina. His head isn't quite level, but his heart is in the right place, as you will discover," and Aglae flashed a mischievous glance at Neal, who paid his compliments in some confusion as Miss Talcott threw back her veil, and lifted to his sight the loveliest face he had ever seen. Ordinarily, he had a hearty contempt for his sister's school-girl friends, and had given his boisterous greeting without a thought for the slight, small figure standing in the background; but he reddened consciously as he made his bow to her, and wished he had regressed his boyish exuberance for once.

"And that was your brother, Aglae?" said Justina, as she sat in the apartment which the two girls were to share jointly, sometime later of that day. "Do you know, I had formed an idea, from your manner of speaking of 'our boys,' that they were little fellows in jackets, considerably younger than yourself! An odd mistake, of no moment, of course, but still I wish I had known."

"You would have refused to come home with me, and I had set my heart on that. And I really had no intention to deceive at first. We are always teasing each other here, and I make it a matter of duty to patronize the boys, just as they persist in treating me like an overgrown baby, instead of a mature young lady of eighteen, who will graduate with honors at the close of the term. It was only after you refused an invitation from Virginia Reis, when she held out as an inducement the prospect of numberless flirtations, that I discovered your error, and conceived the luminous idea of keeping you still in the dark. Now, don't look so woe-begone, please, or I will never have the courage to complete my confession! It is all your fault if I have condescended to 'ways that are dark and tricks that are not vain!' You are such a shy, timid little thing, afraid of your own shadow I verily believe. You seemed so averse to meeting strangers that I spoke of our expected guests as 'a few friends,' which was the truth, though not all the truth. It is, that the house is literally packed from top to bottom, and we will have an animated time for the next month, or this Christmas at Braxtonia will differ very much from all preceding it. Now, you may scold if you like, but it is too late to help yourself or disappoint me."

Miss Talcott did not avail herself of the permission given, but there was a troubled look upon her face which gave Aglae a thrill of compunction.

"What an odd girl you are, Justina!" she broke out presently. "A misanthrope and a regular Britomarte at your age, what will you be by and by? I wonder what any man ever did to you to make you hate the whole race of men as you do?"

Justina's gray eyes dilated with an expression which looked like sudden terror, and she shivered in the mellow warmth of the room.

"I begin to realize that I was chilled through with our ride," she said. "What makes you think that I do hate men, Aglae?"

"Oh, everything in general and nothing in particular. Mainly, I suppose, that you never have a word on the subject of lovers, like all the rest of us, and even that surly old Graybeard of a German professor sets you all a-tremble if he comes on you suddenly. You poor little timid dove! how are you ever going to fight out the battle of life alone, I should like to know! You will have to fall in with my plan, if only in obedience to the law of self-preservation."

"Your plan?" questioned Justina.

"Such retiring innocence would never suspect I had a plan if I didn't tell her outright. Well, never mind, wait until you see Dolph! He is the one perfect idol for my adoration, but Dolph is an angel! There is an exception to every rule, and you have my free permission to hate all created men if you only make him the exception."

"Aglae!" aghast. "Oh, Aglae, I am sorry, sorry that I ever came. Whatever comes of it, don't blame me."

"Silly child! There can be nothing of it except what we would all wish, and if not that there will be no harm done, rest assured. Come in!" There was a tap at the door, and made her appearance.

"Oh, you are Samantha, I suppose," said Aglae, after a momentary start. "You see, Justina, my own little maid of old has married and left us since the last vacation, but I don't feel the loss so much since a sojourn at Madame Joliet's has drilled me into waiting upon myself. You may unpack our trunks, Samantha. Let me see; what shall I wear to-night?"

"De big trunk, honey?" asked the woman, advancing to take the key. "Oh, massful sakes!"

Aglae looked at her wonderingly. She was staring with eyes and mouth open, as if in unbelieveing astonishment, at the still little figure crouched in an easy chair before the hearth. Miss Talcott was looking straight before her into the leaping blaze, but every vestige of color had gone suddenly out of her face, leaving it as emotionless and almost as perfect

as if cut from Carara stone. There was an instant of intense silence, then the black woman tottered forward and fell upon her knees.

"Miss Crecy! Bress de dear Lord, how you come here, chile! Now de good Lord let ole Say lay down and die, comfo't'ble and contentions, sence see dat sweet face onct more. Nebber tought to do it, nebber! Miss Crecy, honey! Hain't ye got jes' one word for de ole 'oman what nussed ye and lubs ye like yer wor her own?"

Justina moved, and looked with her steady fixed gaze into the pleading dusky face before her.

"What does the woman mean?" she asked. "I suppose, Aglae, the poor thing takes me for some former mistress of her own. Do get up, there's a good creature."

The woman's mouth opened, but a flash in the eyes of the girl stopped her words; a stupid blank crossed her countenance, then she got upon her feet again, slowly.

"Axes yer pardon, young miss," she said. "Dat's it, t'ought you wor 'nudder pusson. Dumno what put it in dis yer foolish ole noodle to make sich a mistake."

"Then you are really sure that you do not know Justina?" asked Aglae.

"Sartin sure. Nebber seed she afore—nebber!" reiterated Samantha, shutting her mouth grimly over the words and going silently about her task. And yet Aglae could not get over the thought that there had been a mutual recognition, but she was not of a suspicious nature, and so let the matter drop out of her mind as a thing of no consequence.

For a day or two Miss Talcott mingled among the guests at Braxtonia very shyly; she seemed to shrink from notice, was quiet and constrained; and then gradually her timidity gave way to a natural, captivating grace, she was metamorphosed imperceptibly into an arch, sparkling, fascinating little beauty, whose glances and smiles set inflaming masculine hearts afire.

"You have put temptation before me," she said to her friend, "and I am not strong enough to withstand it. I did so love society once, and this seems like a glimpse of Paradise." The speech, merrily begun, ended in a sigh.

"Once," repeated Aglae. "What a Methusalem we have grown all of a sudden! How long ago, if I may venture to ask, did Miss Justina Talcott, not yet emancipated from boarding-school thralldom, revel in the joys of society?"

"All my life. Did you not know I was raised in society? But that was before I lost papa, and I do not often speak of it." A certain reserve in her tone forbade further questioning, and Aglae remembered then that Miss Talcott had worn mourning when she entered Madame Joliet's establishment one year before.

While this conversation was in progress in the friends' apartment, another was being held below stairs, of which Miss Talcott was the interested subject.

"Dolph, old fellow!" Neal Braxton laid his hand upon his brother's shoulder, as they chanced to meet quite alone in the smoking-room. "Are we both done for in the same way?"

"I fail to understand you, Neal."

"Oh, yes; we generally fail to understand where we haven't the desire to do so. But believe me, it will be better for us to speak plainly and act fairly now. There has never been a harsh thought between us yet, Dolph; let's make a compact here and now that there never shall be. I am dead in love with the little Talcott, so are you. Shall it be a fair field and no favor, each for himself and neither to speak until Christmas-day, and then no hard feelings over the result, old boy?"

The brothers' hands met and were clasped over their compact, and though Neal rattled on of his hopes and his fears, Randolph said not a word. His nature was one with intense depths; he had capacities for good or for evil, yet unfathomable and unsuspected even by himself. His brother's words grated upon his super-sensitive ear. "Dead in love," and his passion was an adoration too sacred to be breathed in idle words.

Christmas-day! A royal Christmas, clothed in ermine, adorned with gems that flashed and sparkled with iridescent rays—in other words, fresh snowfall, and icicles glittering under the sun. Just as evening fell, Dolph found his opportunity, and in a burst of impassioned eloquence such as he had never passed his lips before his story was told.

"You love me?" repeated Justina, a sudden catch in her breath, sudden terror in her eyes. "Oh, forgive me! I was warned of this, but I would not accept the warning. I blame myself more than you can blame me, but I never thought this could come so soon."

"That is no answer. I love you; I ask if you love me. It seems presumptuous to say it, but I believe that you do. Look me in the eyes and tell me it is not so, and I will never trouble you again with my unhappy passion. But if I am blest with your love as I have dared to hope, all earth shall not keep us asunder. Look at me, Justina, and tell me if it is so."

But she did not look; her beautiful face was all pallid and drawn as if with some terrible inward struggle. "Oh, if I dared!" she breathed to herself, but love's hearing is sharp, and he caught the words.

"What is to prevent, Justina?"

"The slight impediment of another husband, young sir. It is a very interesting tableau, and I regret the necessity of spoiling it by warning you that I do not permit any man to use that manner and tone toward my wife."

Both started. The door had opened silently, and upon the threshold stood a strange figure, a tall old man with iron-gray hair and beard and eyes like "pent-up fires," gleaming beneath shaggy brows, a man harsh alike in mien and feature, who remained for a moment gazing upon them with a kind of savage triumph, which made the girl he had claimed as his wife shiver and cower in deadly fear. Behind this apparition came Neal, and pushing his way past he reached his brother.

"It was a narrow escape for us," said Neal, his voice thrilling with indignation. "Norwood gave me the clue. 'If you want to know more of the enchantment who has been turning all your heads, write there,' said he, giving me an address. 'I advise you to do it before the mischief she makes is irretrievable. I am not among her victims, but I don't care to see my friends victimized, though I'm not the sort to hunt any woman down.' Well, I did write, though I wouldn't admit to myself that I suspected her, and to-day without knowing him I saw that man at church watching her with a look which made me long to knock him down. Afterward I followed him, meaning to accomplish my desire, heard his story, and brought him here. She is a vile adventuress with a husband living—that man!"

"That man!" and the "adventuress" were facing each other. Suddenly she brought her

hand from amid the folds of her silken dress, and carried something to her mouth; then looked at him, her eyes full of a desperate calm.

"You will never torture me again," she said. "Dolph!" face and voice softening as she turned to him. "Bless you for the love which would have blest me, had not an inevitable barrier been between us. I dare to tell you this, now that I have cheated him, I have taken poison, which I have carried about me for two years, in preparation for this moment."

What followed was always like some vague, horrible dream in Randolph Braxton's memory; a confusion of frightful images and an outpour of abuse in that strange voice; a vision of Justina falling back in her chair, with a ghastly, death-stricken face, and of poor old Samantha wailing over her.

"My own chile! My own chile! Gone for- ever and forever, and dat ole vilyun killed her sure as he broke her heart long 'go—'deed did he! Oh, de poor, bressed lamb! Tried in sufferin', 'deed was she, de whitest, purest angel dat ebbber trod dis yerth."

And amid her sobs and tears and writhings, the old servant poured out a tale which turned the blood of her hearers cold; of a child, white, bought with a price from a father who, whatever his faults, had been ever indulgent to her, and treated by her husband after the first glamor of the ill-made match was over, with a brutality which might have driven her mad, which did drive her to flight at last, but not until she had borne for years with uncomplaining meekness, and was in fear of her very life. With that tale ringing in his ears, Randolph Braxton broke from them all, well-nigh mad with horror, and rushed out into the darkness of the night; but not before old Neal had laid a restraining hand upon him, and essayed to utter words. Randolph turned.

"Curse you!" he cried, fiercely. "But for your meddling she would have told me all, and I would have saved her from him. They are saying in there that it was he killed her, but I tell you it was you—you—YOU!"

For one year, the evil passions which became dominant upon that night, held sway with him; they grew, they blackened and corrupted his whole soul, and upon the next Christmas-day, reddened his hand with his brother's blood.

Five years since that day, Braxtonia lay with its sharp outlines lost in the gathering twilight, and with lights shining out here and there; and a wanderer and an outcast on the face of the earth was going home at last. Going home to confess his crime, and to plead his repentance and his good works since as an atonement, for if ever man truly repented after overwhelming sinful madness left him, it was this one; if ever man strived humbly and persistently by a life devoted to charitable deeds, to self-repression and self-purification to expiate one dark crime, it was this one. And at last home and friends were close before him. Were they? For years he had had no word; death might have been in the circle there and he never have heard. But no! The parlor lights were ablaze, and showed him within the old father and mother, Aglae and a gentleman who was Aglae's husband.

Then he was within the hall and his hand upon the door, but there a rush of weakness came over him; he turned and entered a room near at hand, meaning to collect himself before he appeared to them, and stopped all at once as if turned to stone.

A vision, rising from the depths of a great chair there, moved forward with outstretched hands, and a glad, incredulous light upon her face.

"Justina!" he said, in an awed whisper. "It is Randolph, at last. Not Justina, but Lucrece!" And before the others were made aware of his presence, he sat down there and she told him the story. The poison she had taken was neither so quick nor sure as she thought; skillful medical aid had been instantly called, and after a long and uncertain battle, she was saved. Meanwhile, the tyrant who had so embittered her life, had fallen down in a fit, brought on by anger at thinking his victim had escaped him, and after a few days' miserable lingering, died and left her free.

"God is very good to me," she said, reverentially, at last. "Ever since I have lived here among the kindest friends I have ever known."

"And I," he cried, brokenly. "I have wrecked my entire life."

"There is comfort for you," she began, eagerly, and just at that the door opened, and Neal stood there; not the bright, boyish Neal she had known, but his wasted semblance upheld by crutches, and wearing that subdued look which great physical suffering alone can give.

"Dolph!" he exclaimed, joyously. "I knew you would come some day, dear old fellow, but it has been long waiting. I wanted to relieve your mind of one load—to tell you of my escape, and that I don't much mind the scratches. That, and to see you happy. Lucrece!" She came at his call.

"Six years ago we two were going to ask you to choose between us. If Randolph is of the same mind still—ah, it needs no words to say that he is—will you go to him now? I have long known he would have been your choice."

"Then," she said, "I not now. The generosity which could overcome all selfishness both of love and resentment, which led you, Neal, to follow him five years ago, for the purpose of telling him what he has but now learned, has won my deepest love, my highest reverence."

And Dolph realized bitterly that his one mad act, the fruit of evil passion, had lost him the prize; but the hard lesson he had learned stood him in good stead, and it was without envy he stood by and knew the happiness of those two was made perfect by a full understanding, upon that Christmas day.

Miss Lola Chavez, daughter of Colonel Francisco J. Chavez, of Los Lunas, ex-delegate to Congress from New Mexico, was married to Don Mariano Arimjo, a wealthy planter of that name at Albuquerque, a few days ago. All the "upperdown," for a few hundred miles around, received invitations. The arrival of the hour for the wedding was announced by the booming of artillery and the playing of a wedding march. Supper was provided for five hundred guests, and fully that number partook of refreshments. The band played and the young folks danced till daylight, and at sunrise the bride and groom and invited merry-makers repaired to the village church, where mass and prayers were offered for the happy couple. Breakfast, scarcely less elaborate than supper, over, the newly-married pair, with their immediate attendants, proceeded in carriages to Los Lunas, followed by a procession of friends. Here the wedding reception lasted till eleven o'clock, but dancing, music and feasting continued all night.

DER DRUMMER.

Who puts out at der pest hotel,
Und dakes his oysters on der shell,
Und mit der frauleins outs a schwell?
Der drummer.

Who vas id gones into mine achlores,
Drows down his pundles on der floor,
Und nefer schtopps to shut ter dore?
Der drummer.

Who dakes me py der handt und say:
"Hans Pfeiffer, how you vas to-day?"
Und goes for peenis right away?
Der drummer.

Who shpreads his zamples in a tree,
Und dells me, "Look, und see how nice!"
Und says, "I gets 'der bottom price!"
Der drummer.

Who says der t'ings vas segstra vine—
"Vrom Sharmany, ubon der Rhine!"
Und sheats me den dimes out of nine?
Der drummer.

Who dells how sheap der goots vas bought,
Mooch less as vot I could imbort,
But lets dem go as he vas "short?"
Der drummer.

Who varrants all der goots to suit
Der gastumers ubon his route,
Und ven dey gomes dey vas no goot?
Der drummer.

Who gomes around ven I been out,
Drinks up mine bier, und eats mine kraut,
Und kiss Katrina in der mouht?
Der drummer.

Who, ven he gomes again dey say,
Vill hear vot Pfeiffer has to say,
Und mit a plack eye goes away?
Der drummer.

Beat Time's Notes.

MANY a nickle makes a mickle.

SHEAR nonsense—a badly-cut suit.

ALAS, how much misery must a man enjoy in this world before he wears a No. 7 boot!

BAR-GAINS: Money made in the saloon business.

IN many cases when a bank is suspended the directors ought to be too.

How lonely a man feels when he is out of everything but debt!

FATHER: "What is all that racket on the stairs?"

Boy: "It is I, sir, rolling rapidly!"

LAKE NIANZA, it is said, does not consist of a chain of five lakes. But it used to; Stanley piled them all up into one when he got there.

AH," said a little boy, exhibiting a dirty handkerchief, "all the white is worn off of this here."

ONCE on a time a little urchin—a little urch—well I forgot what I was going to say, since I come to think about it. I don't think he did, either.

CUSTOMER: Sir, these boots are entirely too small; I shall not take them. Shoemaker: I beg your pardon; those boots are large enough for gracious sake, only your feet are too big.

The customer swore he'd stretch them over his head.

I HAVE been seriously thinking of willing five thousand dollars to the man who will prove to be the greatest friend to me for the rest of my life. Substantial favors in the shape of money could be sent to the undersigned. N. B.—Don't wait for references; I'll send them after the receipt of the donation.

The greatest sorrow which I am called upon to bear is to see my poor, good wife get up these cold mornings and make the fire. I sometimes think I can't stand it much longer; that I will rebel if it costs the peace of the household. It makes my very heartache; I am a sensitive man of the most tender feeling for humanity; hence you can imagine how I rest and see her making the fire in the cold; and I shall use my utmost endeavors to have this stopped by the time warm weather comes, or make a fuss in the attempt.

I AM a very terrible man. When I got mad my anger is as visible as the Northern Lights. I'm worse than the Keely motor broken loose. It has been said that I've got enough mad about me for five or six men. They have to throw buckets of water over me to cool me off, and then pack me away in ice for twenty-four hours. I never lost my temper; it is always on hand at a moment's notice. I have got mad and chased myself all around the house, and if I hadn't escaped I would have got a dreadful licking. It is a shade worse than the hydrophobia.

Jew Clothing Dealer: "Ah, mine frien', dose coat fit you yooost so good as never vas. You vas yooost made for te coat. Long in te sleeves! Ah, dat sleeves vill shrink und shoost pe right. Tight under te arms! Vell, it vill stretch in two days. Ah, if you could yooost stand pack of yourself and see how goot you looks py yourself in dis coat any more, you would dicke yourself in de ribs, and I lets you say any dings to nobody, und I only makes shoost seventy-five cents on it. No, not vone cent less. Don't want it! Now, you shust look at dot coat again. I let you haf him for dwenty dollars, and I goes widout eading nottings do-day. Stop! now vat you gives for dis coat? Ten dollars! You dink I'm a fool a leedle? You don't want dot coat! Say, look a leedle here. Hold on, I dell you what I'll do; you gif fifteen dollars for 'im! Stop den; you dake him for ten dollars, und I dells you, mine frien', I don't makes fifteen cents on dot coat. I can stand it if you can, but you say noddings about 'im und I won't. I should pe mighty glad to haf you call again some-dimes. Goot day!"

We shall commence in No. 305, JACK RABBIT, The Prairie Sport; OR, THE WOLF CHILDREN OF THE LLANO ESTACADO.

BY JOSEPH E. BADGER, JR.

Another Gem of Western Romance and Wild Life in the Fastnesses of the Great Wilderness where Civilization and Savage Barbarism are yet struggling for supremacy. In this field Mr. Badger is confessedly unrivaled, and in this brilliant story he leads the reader such a race with his hurrying events, his breathless perils and novel adventures that to miss the entertainment would be to lose a deep delight.